Directing through montage: a chronological look at the construction of performance through the creation and combination of its various elements.

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CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

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SUMMARY

This thesis is an investigation into the working practices of Odin Teatret. It focuses on the making of the latest group performance, *Kaosmos*, made between 1992-1993. The thesis extracts certain transmissible principles of practice from the process of *Kaosmos*. These principles are concerned with the director's work on performance. The work of the actor is therefore only referred in order to illuminate or explain this. The thesis covers all areas of creative work involved in making performance: the director's instructions, the actors' actions, the texts, music, songs, sound, set, lighting, costumes and props.

This is the first study of the work of Eugenio Barba that follows his process of making a performance from inception to finish, and, from this, extracts principles of practice. This is not just a theoretical or historical document, but one that can hopefully contribute to the working practices of other directors.

The method of investigation was primarily practical. I was assigned the role of assistant director on *Kaosmos*. This gave me a daily insight into the working practice of Odin Teatret in rehearsal. The thesis documents this process through practical analysis and extracts from my work diary. It concludes with a performance-text of *Kaosmos*, the basis of which I created during the process as a working document for Barba and the actors.

The thesis is divided into two main parts: the first part gives the theoretical background to the working practices to be documented later in the thesis. The second part shows how these theories of practice were actually implemented in rehearsal. The aspects here perceived as being central to the making of performance are: 1) the ability to begin work on a performance at a stage before meanings, characters and narratives have been established and 2) the use of montage as the main structural dynamic in the creation of performance.

The intention of the thesis is not to draw any hard-and-fast conclusions. This would endanger the creative nature of the practice it documents and turn the information here offered into a handbook of rules. The intention is rather to allow the information to inspire and inform other practitioners, without creating any definition of how this should occur. It is of upmost importance that each artist interpret and use what is here written in their own individual manner.

All the quotes are given in their language of publication, all translations contained in the text are by myself.

INTRODUCTION

In the film *On The Way Through Theatre*, Eugenio Barba, the founder and director of Odin Teatret says:

> Odin Teatret is a group of people with whom I can experience what it means to be loved. People around you who are deeply tied to you, as you are to them. You live in a permanent state of tension in order to keep these relationships fresh, to be able to surprise and stimulate one another. You are rooted in a social context, a working community with people that nourish you and who you want to see every day, with whom you have shared years and years of sacrifices, victories, dreams. It is important to have a shared history, to go back in time and meet the experiences that are the light which helps us to find our way. [1]

Odin Teatret's Roots

Odin Teatret's roots are spread wide across the continents and eras. Its members draw influences from different cultures and historical moments to form what Barba calls their 'professional identity':

> This professional identity belongs to a transcultural theatre history built up by masters and creators who have preceded us. [2]

This web of influences becomes visible in the performances. An Odin Teatret actor may stand on stage in a Western suit, speaking Norwegian, while his hands fluctuate between soft and strong energies, based in the Balinese dance principles of Keras and Manis (strong and soft). Equally a Butohesque mask appears on the face of an Italian actor as she plays the role of the Jewish heroine, Judith. It is not only the work of the actors that is affected by historical and intercultural influences, but also the work of the director. Barba says:

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1 *On The Way Through Theatre*, directed by Exe Christoffersen.

2 Eugenio Barba, 'Cultural Identity and Professional Identity', *TheTradition of ISTA* (Londrina: FILO, 1994) p.10.

> It is important to have ancestors, not only biologically, but also professionally. As a man of the theatre I have a grandfather: Konstantin Stanislavski. He was extraordinary, not only as an artist, but also as a human being. Through the changing fortunes of his profession and of history, he managed not to lose himself, or that ethos, those values, which sustain life. Values which were not only professional, but also social: how to live with others, how to build a community that wants to work together, and knows how to do so. [3]

Stanislavski, but also Meyerhold, Eisenstein (the Russian film director) and Artaud, amongst others, are Barba's ancestors. From their writings he has gained a base to work from: models, inspiration, ideas, techniques and theories which all inform his work. Like Stanislavski and Meyerhold his role as director has included a development of actor training, like Artaud he believes the actor's presence is the essence of the theatrical experience, like Eisenstein montage holds the key to how he structures his performances.

Later theatre makers, such as Grotowski and Brecht, have had an even more direct influence on the work of Odin Teatret. In 1980 Odin made a performance based on the life and work of Brecht, called *Brecht's Ashes*. Of Brecht, Barba says:

> For Odin Teatret, Brecht is the intellectual who persists in writing poems and plays while barbarism triumphs in Europe. He is forced to renounce his language, home, country, to live in geographical and cultural conditions which humiliate him, but he is not crushed. Every day he sits down at his work table and measures himself against that which is essential. [4]

Barba's theatrical ancestors are of as much importance to him for their very existence and their ability to retain their own values in the face of a hostile environment as for their theatrical innovations and teachings. The strength of these ancestors in the face of adversity is an inspiration to all those who follow. They act as professional role models, both as artists, and as leaders.

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3 *On The Way Through Theatre.*

4 *On The Way Through Theatre.*

The most important of all these ancestors is Grotowski. Barba spent the years 1961 - 1963 with him in Opole, Poland, at his Theatre of the Thirteen Rows. During this period he observed the actor training and rehearsals. The research and experimentation in which Grotowski was engaged in the 1960s came to provide the basis of Barba's approach to theatre when he set up Odin Teatret. Barba still today acknowledges Grotowski as his master.

Beyond these people of influence and allegiance, lie the traditional theatre and dance forms from around the world, that have also greatly influenced the work of Odin Teatret.

Odin Teatret's History

Eugenio Barba is Italian. By the time he set up Odin Teatret he had travelled the world on board cargo ships, he had been to India to study Kathakali and most importantly he had spent three years with Grotowski, in Poland. When the Polish authorities refused Barba re-entry into Poland, after one of his many trips abroad, he returned to Oslo in Norway, where he had previously been a student. Barba founded Odin Teatret in Oslo, in 1964, together with some young people who had been rejected by traditional theatre schools. Today, two of the founding actors remain. They have been joined by many others over the years, some of whom have remained, some of whom have not. There are currently nine actors in the company.

In 1966 the young company was invited to settle in the town of Holstebro, in Denmark, and here it has remained ever since. Odin Teatret became the repertory theatre of Holstebro. They did not however agree to the terms that normally apply to a local rep theatre. They would not produce a set number of productions a year,

perhaps they would not even produce one for some years. They established themselves in the converted pig-farm lent to them by the municipality and began to work, above all, on actor training.

Odin Teatret has been one of the major exponents and developers of actor training in contemporary experimental theatre. In the beginning the training was the central focus of their work and with this came a commitment to theatrical pedagogy. For a period Odin Teatret ran extensive workshops, inviting masters such as Grotowski, Dario Fo and Ingemar Lindh to come and teach. At the same time as having a strong ideological commitment to actor training the workshops were also a means of generating an income for a young group that existed off a subsidy that was the equivalent of a single person's income. Nowadays Odin Teatret receives considerable state funding, but is nevertheless obliged to earn 60% of its own budget. As they are based in the small town of Holstebro, their local audiences are not enough to provide this income. This obliges them to tour far and wide in order to play enough performances (with small audiences, so that intimacy can be maintained) to cover their budget. This practical necessity, combined with the political interests of the group in performing in places not generally visited by theatre, has led to eight months of touring a year.

These extensive travels to foreign lands mean that the theatre building in Holstebro can sometimes seem little more than an administrative base and storage space. Barba asks; 'What is theatre? A building perhaps, where spectators go in, go out, see old and new plays? The big theatre, the small theatre, the Alexandrinsky theatre or another kind of theatre? Is theatre a building, or is it the people who do it?'[5]

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5 *On The Way Through Theatre*.

Odin Teatret is the people who do it. It is not a name or an institution that will out-live its current director and actors. They are Odin Teatret. However their building too is important, it is a tool essential to their work and to that of others. It is something they have built with their own hands, as the building in which they are based has undergone various extensions, some of which the actors built themselves. The three large work rooms, one smaller one, the music room, video and film edit suite, sound studio, sewing room, workshop, library, offices, kitchen, changing rooms and numerous guest bed-rooms are not only essential in allowing the Odin to work in peace, carry out their training on a daily basis and to rehearse for months on end, but these spaces are also a home, meeting point and work-space for many visitors from all over the world. The Odin's openness and generosity with their theatre space is due to their pedagogic sense of responsibility. Often Barba and the actors will go out of their way to enable visiting companies to borrow rehearsal space and make use of all the facilities the theatre offers, sometimes for months on end. This adamant support of smaller, poorer groups is one example of Barba's continuing interest in marginalized theatres, groups whom he identifies as belonging to the 'Third Theatre' - a term coined by Barba to define theatre practitioners and groups that belong neither to main-stream traditional theatres nor to the accepted avant-garde. 'The essential character of the Third Theatre is the autonomous construction of a meaning which does not recognize the boundaries assigned to our craft by the surrounding culture.' [6] The Odin has always been a champion of those who work unsupported and outside the system. They support those who refuse to compromise and who do not fit into funding structures or into fashionable categories of performance genre. One of Barba's

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6 Eugenio Barba, 'Third Theatre: a Legacy From Us To Ourselves' *NTQ*, vol. VIII, n.29, (February 1992), p.8.

sayings, which has almost become Odin Teatret's motto, is: 'Do not be seduced by the spirit of the times...What you must do, you must do.'[7] Through this preservation of self in the face of hostile or fickle pressures from outside, Barba and the actors have gone from being the breakers of rules to the makers of new ones.

Barba has provided a model for directors, both artistically and as a leader of a theatre group. Being a leader means, amongst other things, being able to keep a group in a creative and cohesive state. Most members of the group are involved in independent projects. Barba calls these projects the 'centrifugal forces', as they disperse the members of the group into separate areas of interest. However, these activities in turn nourish the group, stop them turning stale and enable them, after thirty years of collaboration, to continue to surprise and challenge each other. Thus the structuring of the overall work of the group becomes a fine balance between allowing time and space for individual activities, and creating projects that re-unite the group into a single unit, around the central figure of Barba. The group performances are the main unifying activity. At a meeting before beginning work on the latest group performance, *Kaosmos*, Barba asked the actors what it was that they wanted, what they needed. They replied 'To be in the work room with you'. And thus *Kaosmos* was born not so much of ideas and themes, as of the simple need of the group to work together, to continue to work together.

My Connection To Odin Teatret

When, at eighteen years old, I first visited Odin Teatret I saw the final rehearsals of *Oxyrhincus Evangeliet*, the group performance that was premiered in March 1985. I

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7 *On The Way Through Theatre*.

felt at once blessed and cursed. I felt blessed to have been present at this event, the most deeply frightening and spiritual experience of my life. Seeing *Oxyrhincus* made me understand what Barba means when he says a performance must have a kinesthetic effect on the spectator. I became physically addicted to the adrenalin rush of fear I would get each time I watched the performance. I felt as though I were participating in a black mass, which conjured up the actual presence of evil. Still today I do not like to be alone in the room where this performance was made. I felt cursed because from now on everything else would pale in comparison. I knew that this was the kind of work of I wanted to make, that I believed had real value, and that anything else would now be a refusal of this challenge. I was not pleased at this, I could see that to make this kind of work meant to be a lot more committed, a lot more serious, than the eighteen year old me was sure I was capable of being. It did not occur to me that I would ever work with the company. I certainly had no desire to, I found them far too strange, far too frightening. All I knew was that they existed, and by their very existence they would somehow guide and challenge me to try to work like them. I saw them as magicians, possessors of secrets, that only the initiated could begin to understand. It was absolutely incomprehensible to me that the power of their performance was not based in black magic, but in hard work, precision, experience, certain principles of practice...

Ten years later, I have been part of the whole process of the making of *Kaosmos*, the group performance that had its premiere in April 1993. Through this I have seen the hard work, the precision and the patience and I have seen certain principles of practice in action, and perhaps equally importantly I have seen how they do not always follow these principles, but sometimes go against them. I have, in other

words, been witness to the practice and the process. But the magic, I am still convinced, lies a little beyond the realm of any of these. It has something to do with time, experience, layers and depths. It lies in the director's secret sources and motivations and is visible only in the glow of the actors in the moment of performance. Sometimes that glow is not there and the magic disappears. Much of this is to do with the actors' timing, voice pitch and other technicalities, but exactly what creates the magic I do not know, so I must just leave that as a doubt, and offer the practical information that I can.

In an attempt to demystify some of the magic, and make the spells a little more accessible, this thesis will look at the techniques of the director in the making of *Kaosmos*. As such it is an empirical investigation, but the principles that are here shown as belonging to the basis of the director's technique have also been employed in their other rehearsal processes of which I have been an observer/participant. *Kaosmos* is therefore being used as a detailed illustration of principles belonging to a wider area of research. This recurrence of certain principles of practice does not turn them into rules or a methodology, but rather aims to offer them as possible principles and tools for use in the rehearsal room. As Ferdinando Taviani, one of Barba's closest academic collaborators says:

> *Le scienze dell'arte sembrano sempre ambigue: non si capisce se siano il frutto di osservazzione empirica o se invece siano norme per raggiungere la buona qualità. Ci vuol poco a metterle in contraddizione, appunto perchè oscillano fra l'uno e l'altro di quei poli. In realtà consistono proprio nell'oscillazione. Sono (...) <u>hand made theories</u> che servono a fornire sistemi d'orientamento ad un modo d'operare che trova la sua eccellenza nel disorientamento. In questo senso sono esattamente l'opposto di un'estetica o d'una poetica: stanno alle singole techniche artistice come le estetiche e le poetiche stanno ai singoli prodotti finiti. Ma poichè forniscono generalizzazioni utili a partire dall'osservasione empirica, sono scienze, pur non essendo <u>esatte</u>.*
>
> The sciences of the arts always appear ambiguous: one cannot understand if they are the fruit of empirical observation, or if they are norms by which a high standard can be achieved. It is easy to find their contradictions, precisely because

> they oscillate between these two poles. In reality they consist of precisely this contradiction. They are (...) hand made theories that are useful for creating systems of orientation in a way of working that is at its best when disorientated. In this sense they are exactly the opposite of an aesthetics or poetics: they are relevant to the individual artistic techniques, just as an aesthetics or poetics refers to the finished product. They are sciences, even though not exact, as they give useful generalizations on the basis of an empirical observation. [8]

This thesis will focus purely on the work of the director. The actors' work will be discussed only with reference to the work of the director. The actors are the living incarnation of the performance, and without their technical professionalism and imaginative creativity Barba would not be able to work. Normally, however, it is they who are visible, both on stage and in theoretical and documentary texts about the work of the Odin. Here it will be the usually invisible work of Eugenio Barba that is made visible.

Being assistant director

It wasn't until my name, and that of Lluis Masgrau, appeared in the programme of *Kaosmos* that we were even given the title of assistant directors. Thus not only was our role in the work undefined, but we were never given any indication by Barba as to how we might contribute to the process. When I asked him, he would just reply that we were contributing by our presence. Fortunately this was not the first time that I had the role of assistant director in the work of Odin Teatret, I had also been assistant to Julia Varley during work on *I Almost Heard the Bomb*, a performance that was never completed, and to Eugenio Barba on *Klubauterfolket*, a performance made in two weeks, to be presented only during the Holstebro Festive Week 1991. Though I had not been able to contribute much to either production, I had learnt something

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8 Ferdinando Taviani, 'Ricordi e altre Allegrezze: Cronache e Digressioni dall'International School of Theatre Anthropology (1979-1993)' (unpublished text, Italy, 1994), p.30 -31.

about how to operate within the Odin work process. I knew that a) the definition of my role and what I contributed would be entirely up to me and b) that there was no point in trying to follow the director's logic, as I would only become lost. I knew it was pointless to ask Barba what his logic was, as not only was it subject to change, but in asking I would be condemned to trying to follow him, rather than having the possibility of finding something myself. I would have to follow my own logics and hopefully thereby find some meeting points with those of Barba and the performance. Only in this way would I be able to contribute something different, interesting, useful.

The process of *Kaosmos* took place in three evolutionary stages:

Stage one

This was a period for the gathering of material and discovery of possible themes. At the very beginning of the process there was total freedom, the feeling 'anything goes'. All material: songs, actions, costumes, ideas, etc. were useful.

Stage two

Suddenly invisible doors began to close. There was a loss of freedom and yet there was still no orientation in the work. This was for me, and I think the actors, the most difficult moment in the work. We were all lost, feeling, what Barba calls 'sea-sick', for him a cherished state of being in which the performance flounders onto unexpected shores.

This period lasted for many difficult months, during which time I became incapable of contributing or even of receiving something from the images I watched. The actors too seemed to be lost.

Stage three

Finally Julia advised me: don't focus on the whole thing, but concentrate on the details. This advice was fundamental in helping me to find a way back into the work. I began to scan the work for holes and missing details. I soon learned that a concentration on details is essential to the Odin way of working.

Gradually, over the following weeks and months some of the hidden logics of the work began to become visible through the naming of characters and introduction of texts. The actors began to gain confidence and the final details of the performance began to fall into place.

These three phases are documented in the following chapters on the process:

Phase one: **Launching the Boat**

Phase two: **The Methodology of Sea-Sickness**

Phase three: **Sailing** and **Casting Anchor**

The other chapters give the theoretical background to the work.

DRAMATURGICAL TECHNIQUES

Historically speaking Odin Teatret belongs to the post-Grotowskian era of 'actors' theatre', or 'poor theatre'. Both titles indicate that the actor is the central focus and all other scenic elements are minimized so as not to cover, detract from or compensate for the work of the actor. At Odin Teatret not only do the actors find themselves perhaps the only element on a bare stage, but they themselves are, to a large degree, the source of what they enact on that stage, for they have achieved a further 'poverty' by not using a pre-written play as a definition of character and plot.

At the beginning of his work with Odin Teatret Barba did work from theatrical texts, which he deconstructed and then reconstructed, but he soon abandoned the text as a starting point and improvised material came to replace any form of pre-conceptualization. He writes:

> During the first few years of my work in the theatre, I interfered with the text, which was the point of departure for the production, by creating unexpected changes of direction, breaking the text's linear development and composing the general action through the montage and interweaving of two or more simultaneous actions. The text, in these cases, was like a wind blowing in one direction. The production sails against the wind, in the opposite direction. But it is still the power of the wind which is the motive force.
>
> Later, another possibility was revealed - and accepted not without fear and resistance: to follow the logic of the material which surfaced in the course of the actors' improvisations, moving away from the point of departure and discovering only at the end of the process what the nature of the production might be, what meaning it might have for myself and for the audience. [1]

Once the play text had gone the actor and director were no longer collaborating across a field of pre-established points of reference. They entered rather into a symbiotic relation of reactive improvisation.

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1 Eugenio Barba, *The Dilated Body* (Rome: Zeami Libri,1985), p.28-29.

When Odin Teatret begin work on a new performance there may be no thematic or narrative frame-work. The only thing they always have are certain shared principles of practice which form the basis of the actor-director collaboration. These principles are not concerned with what is being made (the story, characters, plot) but with how it is being made (the actors' presence, choreographic elements, dynamics in the space etc.). These principles belong to what is called the 'pre-expressive level'. Odin Teatret build their performances through a two-tier process by working on the 'pre-expressive' and the 'expressive' levels of the dramaturgy.

The Pre-Expressive Level

'Pre-expressive' is a term usually used in reference to the actors' work on their scenic presence, as developed in the training. Pre-expressivity is the field of research of ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology).[2]

The Odin Teatret actors' training is a daily work of the actor on their mental and physical presence and agility. Originally the training was practised as a group with Barba following the work. All the actors did the same exercises, with no differentiation between the sexes. The exercises were self-taught, each actor contributing any knowledge or skills s/he had. Later the older actors became responsible for following the training of the new actors, and many of the original exercises were passed on down through the generations. Over the years the training

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2 Barba's main area of work outside of Odin Teatret, is with ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology). He is the director of this 'school', which is in fact an itinerant research laboratory that holds about one session a year in different locations. Its core members are performers from different traditional dance and theatre forms such as Indian Orissi dance, Japanese Kabuki theatre, Balinese dance and Afro-Brazilian Orixá dance. The performers are also joined by an international team of scholars. The central focus of the research of ISTA is the performers' technical work on their scenic presence.

has ceased to be communal and is now personally devised and individually practised. Certain principles have, however, remained as the shared basis of the performer training. These principles are seen as belonging to the pre-expressive level of the performers' work. Some of these basic principles are:

a) The principles of opposition/negation.

These relate to how the actors compose their bodies, working with contrasting dynamics. Barba often refers to classical statues to illustrate these principles. The statues are apparently dynamic, even though immobile, because their limbs turn in opposing directions, avoiding symmetry. The principle of opposition can, for example, be worked on through exercises of introversion and extroversion, whereby different parts of the body are turned either in or out, thus giving contradictory messages to the spectator.

The principle of negation is virtually the same as that of opposition, except that it is not so much compositional in space as dynamic in time. Actors may, for example, bend their knees, as though they were going to sit down, but instead they jump up. In this way they negate what they were doing before and become surprising both to themselves and the spectator.

b) Working with different kinds of balance.

This is another technical principle of the training. Instead of working with an easy balance, that may be used in daily life, the performer chooses a way of walking, standing or dancing that puts them off balance, as for example in Kabuki dance, where it is the outer edges of the feet that are often used. This causes micro-tensions within the body that keep it alert and scenically alive.

c) Changing qualities of energy.

These are worked on through different exercises; for example, a skipping dance called 'the wind dance' is used to achieve a light energy, whereas the stamping, flat-footed walk of the 'samurai' generates a stronger, heavier energy.

d) Changes in rhythm and direction in the space.

These changes stop the actions becoming repetitive or predictable.

All these principles belong to the actors' work on the pre-expressive level. Their aim in working with the pre-expressive principles is to make their actions scenically alive and therefore interesting to watch, independently of the story or character they are enacting. Franco Ruffini, one of the core team of scholars involved in ISTA explains this:

> *Il livello pre-espressivo è il livello in cui il corpo in azione costruisce la propria organicità, a prescindere da ciò che il corpo in azione esprime e a prescindere dal fatto stesso che il corpo in azione esprime o meno.*
>
> The pre-expressive level is the level at which the body in action constructs its own organicity, without taking into consideration either that which the body in action expresses or whether or not the body in action does or does not express something.[3]

The training and the pre-expressive principles are the actors' professional 'background'. Though learnt and developed in the training these principles also contribute greatly to the actors work on material for performance. They enable the actors to elaborate their material in order to maximise its scenic life. In *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese explain how, by working on the pre-expressive level, the actors can focus on the scenic life of their actions, rather than their meaning:

> The level which deals with how to render the actor's energy scenically alive, that is, with how the actor can become a presence which immediately attracts the spectator's attention, is the pre-expressive level and is theatre anthropology's field of study.

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3 Ruffini, Franco, unpublished statement, 1994.

This pre-expressive substratum is included in the expression level, in the totality perceived by the spectator. However, by keeping this level separate during the work process, the performer can work on the pre-expressive level, *as if*, in this phase, the principal objective was the energy, the presence, the *bios* of his actions and not their meaning.

The pre-expressive level thought of in this way is therefore an operative level: not a level which can be separated from expression, but a pragmatic category, a praxis, the aim of which, during the process, is to strengthen the performer's scenic *bios*. [4]

This 'scenic *bios*', more than any themes or ideas, is the source of Odin Teatret's productions. The performances 'grow out of' the actors' actions. Essential to this is the difference between an action that has been made to function at the pre-expressive level, and that is therefore scenically alive and suggestive, and any abstract action, which could be scenically dead, a mere movement in space which did not appear to indicate anything beyond its own form. It is, however, important that the action is suggestive and open to interpretation, and not prescriptive or mimetically illustrative and already attempting to tell something. Julia writes; 'The actions can be mimed, but without becoming anecdotal and indicating directly what they refer to, so as to open up possibilities of meaning instead of closing them. The actions can also be abstract.'[5]

The emphasis is on making actions, not on acting. Barba here explains to the actors how to *do*, rather than how to *act*, by simply carrying out actions without trying to express anything through the actions:

> *Ognuno di noi ha una precisa serie di azioni che ci permettono di non recitare (...) Durante tutto lo spettacolo non cercare l'espressività ma solo di mantenere la precisione e la conseguenza delle azioni: e da questo scaturisce l'espressività.*

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4 Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* (London: Routledge,1991), p.188. This study contains an exhaustive account of the work of the performer on the pre-expressive level.

5 Julia Varley, '"Subscore": A Word That is Useful - But Wrong', *NTQ* vol.XI, n.42 (May 1995), p.172.

> Each of us has a precise series of actions that enable us not to act (...) During the whole performance, do not seek expressivity but only to maintain the precision and sequence of your actions: expressivity will result from this. [6]

Brook, also describes how an action is automatically expressive, without the doer attempting to express anything:

> I look at all of you, and although you did not attempt to 'tell' anything, to try to 'say' anything, you just let your arm go where it wished, yet each of you is expressing something. Nothing is neutral. [7]

Julia explains the difference between attempting to express something through actions and creating actions that are expressive:

> During the first years, to create material and from the need to expresss, I used conceptual images and linear stories. In those years the material which resulted, even if it had a deep meaning for me, often did not manage to surprise me, nor function in the process of building a performance.
>
> Today I know that the rules and the principles of that level of work which we call pre-expressive - which is to say, how to be present, alive and believable on stage, independent of what one represents - can determine both the content of an improvisation and the meanings which the spectator will read from the performance.
>
> For example, in a sequence of actions which I am creating, independently of the theme or the story, the strong or soft quality of energy, the fast or slow rhythm, the extrovert or introvert colour, the different directions in the space, the kind of balance, the chosen coherence, will always try to alternate to create the variations and the oppositions which give life to the scenic behaviour. Following these principles, both when working with an improvisation or composing a character's way of being, the meanings or the emotions are a result not looked for beforehand, but something which can surprise me. I discover that *I am told*, when I abandon the point of view of one who *wants to tell*. [8]

Thus in the initial stages of working on a performance it is not the meaning of the material that is important, but its scenic life and potential usefulness. For a long time the process progresses at the pre-expressive level, and only at the end of the process is the performance fully realized on the expressive level.

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6 Eugenio Barba, *Il Brecht dell'Odin* (Milan:Ubulibri,1981), p.101.
7 Peter Brook, *There Are No Secrets* (Britain: Methuen,1993), p.68.
8 Julia Varley, '"Subscore": A Word That is Useful - But Wrong.', p.170 -171.

This summary of the actors' work on the pre-expressive level, both in the training and in the creation of material for performance, is necessary to an understanding of the director's work at this level. The pre-expressive principles are a shared verbal and technical vocabulary, that enhance and facilitate the collaboration between the actors and director in work on performance.

It is the work of the director that is to be looked at here and although ISTA uses the terms pre-expressive and expressive in relation to the work of the actor they will here be used in relation to the work of the director, and as a tool for analysing the different technical steps involved in the process of making *Kaosmos*. The term 'pre-expressive dramaturgy' will here be used to denote the director's ability to work on actions and scenes before knowing what their final narrative will be. The pre-expressive level of the dramaturgy is concerned with the scenic life of the actions/scenes, but not with their meaning. It is the level that affects the senses of the spectator, but it is not the level at which the director seeks to guide their imaginations. The pre-expressive dramaturgy is concerned with creating sensorial, kinesthetic stimulation. Therefore the pre-expressive level gives the director the possibility of working on the performance at a stage before characters and story have begun to appear. A pre-expressive dramaturgy allows for the creation of a living organism, that has not yet decided what kind of creature it is going to be. The consequence of this is that nothing need be decided in advance. Barba writes:

> *Ese nivel pre-expresivo para un director o un actor significa vivir en el nivel de las energías, que todavía no se han destinado o no hemos decidido que se destinen a algunas significaciones para el espectador. Trabajar sobre ese nivel durante el processo, cuando aùn no hay espectador, es muy importante.*

For the director and actor, working at this pre-expressive level means to live at the level of energies, which have not yet determined, or of which we have not yet

> determined the meaning for the spectator. Working on this level during the process, while there are no spectators, is very important. [9]

Once the pre-expressive level of the dramaturgy has been established the actions/scenes are elaborated at the level of meanings, through techniques relating to what will here be called the 'expressive dramaturgy'. Thus the process is divided between the techniques relating to the pre-expressive and expressive levels of dramaturgy. The essential difference between these two terms, as they are used here, is that the first denotes the work on aspects of performance that are not given meanings, but that may cause them to appear, the second refers to given meanings. Thus for the director the difference lies between being guided and guiding.

The director's work at the pre-expressive level is different to that of the performer, but the two are complementary. The director could not operate at this level if the performer were not capable of doing the same. In choosing the terms pre-expressive and expressive in order to analyse the dramaturgical work of the director the dependence of his way of working on the ability of the actors to also work on these levels becomes inherent to the whole analysis.

Many of the pre-expressive techniques of the actor can also be used by the director in the dramaturgical work. The principle of opposition, for example, can be employed by the director in montaging two contrasting scenic elements together. This transference of acting principles to the dramaturgical work is a possibility defined by the Argentinian director, Cristina Castrillo; 'The physical rules of the actor, lines in the space, breaking those lines, oppositions etc., can also be used in creating the structures of a performance.' [10]

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9 Eugenio Barba, 'Antropología Teatral' *Teatro - Apuntes*, n.99, primavera-verano, (1989), p.92.

10 Video. *In Transit - Hidden Directions*: from the Transit Festival at Odin Teatret (1992), made by Vagn Groth and Leo Sykes.

Therefore it is not a question of stealing the terminology of one field and applying it to another, but of transgressing the limits of the performers' work to see what the consequences of their way of working can have on the whole process of making a performance and on the director's way of working. Indeed, this transgression, or rather development, is in many ways the subject of enquiry of ISTA. Here Ferdinando Taviani describes the work at the first ISTA, which took place in Bonn in 1980:

> The aim was to try to understand how you can pass from work on the pre-expressive level to that on the higher level of dramaturgy and meanings. [11]

And in 1994 he wrote:

> *Anche la coda drammaturgica ha un equivalente al livello d'organizzazione pre-espressivo, in quel ricorrente consiglio a non chiudere sempre il movimento sul suo tratto accentato.*
>
> The dramaturgical *coda* also has an equivalent at the pre-expressive level of organization, as exemplified in that repeated advice of not always reducing the movement to its most obvious characteristics.[12]

This indicates the possibility of creating a dramaturgy that not only uses the specific pre-expressive principles of the performer, but that is based on the same premise - not to work on a single or pre-determined meaning of an action/scene, but on its scenic life. In other words the director can think of composing the performance firstly at the level of a 'dance', that of scenically alive actions that have not yet been elaborated at the level of meaning. At this level it is possible to combine the actions of different actors, so that rhythmically and spatially they function in relationship to each other. Barba writes:

> It is also obvious that this complexity [the performer's score] is not made cohesive and consistent because of the narrative thread. It is the organicity which makes

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11 Ferdinando Taviani, 'What Happens at an ISTA session?', *The Tradition of ISTA* (FILO: Londrina, 1994), p.2.

12 Ferdinando Taviani, 'Ricordi e altre Allegrezze: Cronache e Digressioni dall'International School of Theatre Anthropology (1979-1993)' (unpublished text, Italy, 1994), p.61.

the action real, because the individual photograms are assembled respecting the pre-expressive principles which render the performer's body a body-in-life (...)

The dramaturgy of the score is first of all used to fix the form of the action, that is, to animate it with details, détours, impulses and counterimpulses. This elaboration is important for the performer. Upon it depends the precision and thus the quality of the presence.

The aim here is a microscopic dramaturgy. It is one of the means used by the performer to pass from a design of movements conceived of in general to a design which is defined in its most minimal particularities. [13]

The principles that guide a pre-expressive dramaturgy are valid from the microcosmic level of the single action, all the way up to the macrocosm of the dramaturgical structure of the whole performance. *Kaosmos* existed in many of its details as well as as an overall basic structure, before characters and story were introduced. These were not introduced from outside, but rather began to appear from the material itself. Until, however, the material did begin to suggest possible characters and stories, the actors and director were, in many ways, lost. They had their own sub-texts for the scenes, but they did not have a shared meaning, nor did they know what the scene would eventually be about. Nor, indeed, did they yet know what the performance itself was about. The sub-texts are the personal, submerged logics that guide the actors and director in their creation and composition of the performance. These sub-texts are essential to the actors and director, even while working on the pre-expressive level. It is the actors' sub-texts, their 'inner stories', that enable them to retain the precision and life of their actions.

This 'precision' is not the exact repetition of the form of the action, so much as the inner life of the action, that which makes the action believable. This 'precision' is the actors' responsibility and is rooted in their personal sub-texts. The actors' inner stories remain private. Barba will only ever ask an actor what they are doing if their

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13 Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe* (London: Routledge,1995), p.126.

actions are 'formalistic', lacking in meaning both for themselves and for those observing, (see section on formalism in 'Plain Sailing' for more about this). He questions them in these cases not because he wants to know their inner stories, but in order to help them to clarify their inner story to themselves, and thereby give a greater precision to their actions. As Grotowski writes:

> Respect for the actor's autonomy does not mean lawlessness, lack of demands, never ending discussions and the replacement of action by continuous streams of words. On the contrary, respect for autonomy means enormous demands, the expectation of a maximum creative effort and the most personal revelation. [14]

On the other hand, it is the directors' sub-text, his 'inner story' for the actors' actions that enables him to help the actors elaborate their actions. This 'story' may result from the action, it may have been what the director saw in the action, or it may be that different actions create a 'story' when placed together. Or, alternatively, the director's sub-text can be something that he has decided on independently. On the basis of this he can select and elaborate some of the actions he is presented with. While the pre-expressive principles help an action become scenically effective and alive, the director's sub-texts help him decide in which direction the action should be developed and what its meaning is going to be within the expressive level of the performance.

Barba does not divulge and explain all his sub-texts to the actors, let alone the spectators. Often they will remain as submerged currents, with only Barba aware of how they are influencing the course of the performance. Barba and the actors do not interfere with each other's sub-texts, nor do they even know them most of the time. The actor must always follow her own inner logic and not succumb to that of the director. The intentions lying behind the actions are the actors' independent field of

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14 Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (London: Methuen,1976), p.214.

creativity. Barba will change the actors' physical actions, but will never tell them what their inner story should be. At a conference in Holstebro, in 1992, he explained; 'As a director I'm not interested in what happens in the actor, if he has a story or not. What I am interested in is whether it functions or not for me as a spectator.' [15]

The work in rehearsal at Odin Teatret is therefore full of unspoken meanings. Unspoken because of the relationship between actor and director in which each is following their own inner logic or sub-text.

Gradually however shared meanings, characters and narratives begin to appear from the material itself and the performance begins to move on to the expressive level. This 'magical' transition from the pre-expressive to the expressive can take place precisely because an abstract action can have expressive potential. The seeds of the expressive are contained within the pre-expressive. Manfred Pfister writes:

> Implicit in our concept of action are the three elements that we felt were integral parts of a story (a human subject and the dimensions of time and space), because the 'intentional choice' implies a human subject, the situation a spatial dimension and the transition from one situation to another temporal dimension. *From this we may conclude that every action and every action sequence is a story or part of a story.* [16]

The action does not serve the story, it contains the story. In this way the pre-expressive level becomes the 'seed-bed' of the performance. That which was not decided *a priori* becomes visible later on. Of Eisenstein it is written that:

> Eisenstein (...) felt the image to be something which develops almost spontaneously out of the representations which the artist is manipulating. The artist thus does not begin with a total view but arrives at one, something unnamable driving him to choose certain representations and to combine them in ways which emphasize certain relationships. [17]

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15 Eugenio Barba at 'A Practical Conference' held on 17.2.92 by Julia Varley at Odin Teatret.

16 Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1988), p.199-200. (My italics).

17 J. Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories* (New York: O.U.P.,1976), p.72.

Because the material has been worked on at the pre-expressive level its expressive potential is released and in turn it is then possible for the director to start defining the story and naming the characters. The performance begins to be elaborated on the expressive level.

The Expressive Level

At the pre-expressive level of the dramaturgy the scenically alive but abstract actions remain potentially expressive. What they express is not, however, defined. Following on from this, in the work on the expressive level of the dramaturgy, the director begins to either define the meanings of the actions, or allows the different potential/inherent meanings of each action to become more apparent. The term 'expressive dramaturgy' will here be used to denote the work on performance that is specifically related to meaning. The expressive dramaturgy is the level that orientates the spectator by giving them the information they need in order to be able to create an interpretation of the performance. This meaning can either be highly specific, or very open-ended. The expressive level acts as a catalyst to the spectator's imaginations.

The expressive level of *Kaosmos* was elaborated over the top of the basic structure created at the pre-expressive level. Once the sequence of scenes had been established at the pre-expressive level, it was not changed. The structure remained as a skeleton, to which the flesh could then be added. The individual actor's material also remained the same, although often being rendered unrecognizable by new contexts.

The most apparent aspect of the expressive level is the text. This is the means by which characters can be named and narratives given. A more complex way of working on the expressive level is to develop it through montage. Through montaging

individual elements the director can create contexts that indicate meaning. Once contexts were being created, even though technically Barba and the actors continued to work with techniques relating to the pre-expressive level, the material itself became expressive. As Barba said:

> *Il terzo livello, quello del contesto, è il tessuto, che rivela i dettagli, le sfumature, i colori, i disegni, le trame. È la miniera da cui lo spettatore trae i significati.*
>
> The third level, that of context, is the fabric that reveals the details, the shadings, the colours, the patterns, the plots. It is the mine from which the spectator draws meaning. [18]

Three basic things can happen, through montage, once the work has been made to function at the pre-expressive level:

a) The director can develop the expressive level entirely in accordance with the pre-expressive level of the actions, allowing and encouraging the expressive to 'grow out of' or 'manifest itself through' the pre-expressive. For example, an outstretched arm with an inclined hand that slowly moves downwards is in itself an action that does not yet 'mean' anything, but it could suggest, express, a caress. The director can then follow this suggestion and confirm it on the expressive level as a caress by placing the action of the hand in close proximity to the face of another actor. A clear level of meaning, expression, is established. One actor/character is caressing the face of another. This could be elaborated into a love scene.

b) The director can contradict the original simple, 'inherent' expression of the pre-expressive level with a second, 'artificial', more complex expressivity, creating a mutually subversive relationship between them. For example by placing a knife in the caressing hand, so that it is now a blade rather than fingers that stroke the receiving

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18 Eugenio Barba, 'El Caballo de Plata. Seminario per Danzatori e Coreografi', *Teatro e Storia*, Il Mulino, Milan, Anno V, n.2, (ottobre 1990), p.335-336.

cheek. Is this still a love scene, a murder scene, a joke? The spectators receive contradictory information and must themselves interpret a situation that refuses to resolve itself.

Limited and perhaps contradictory information can be given at the expressive level, so that things are not directly explained to the spectator, but remain ambiguous. On the other hand, the expressive level *can* give clear information, telling the spectator what is happening. On the day Barba named the characters in *Kaosmos*, he made this statement about the use and effect of the expressive level within the performance; 'In this frame we have some well defined characters. This gives some essential information or NO information in order to give more freedom, or rather create more anxiety.' [19] In other words, to give the spectator information does not necessarily help clarify things for them.

c) The director can re-work the material, because though it functions at the pre-expressive level it is found to be inappropriate once the expressive level comes into play. During the process of *Kaosmos* a whole scene was developed between Roberta and Tina. Once the characters had been named and some of the narratives had been established, the relationship implied by the scene was no longer appropriate. Tina and Roberta retained their original, individual material, but it was re-contextualized and put in relation to different actors, so that their same actions now expressed something different.

On the other hand, a scene/action does not have to function at the pre-expressive level for it to function at the expressive level. Contexts and relationships can turn something that is in itself scenically dead, into something interesting. Julia

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19 Leo Sykes, 'Work Diary: Kaosmos' (unpublished text, Denmark: 1992-1993)

gives the example of an actor standing, slouching, on stage. The actor is not in herself interesting, but make three other people run past her and suddenly she becomes interesting through her stage relationships. The context is highly expressive, even though the slouching actor is not herself scenically alive or functioning according to any of the pre-expressive principles. As Barba writes:

> *Una azione che può aver vita al primo livello, può perderla entrando nel secondo. E viceversa, ciò che prima era inerte può divernire vivo in situazione di relazione.*
>
> An action that has life at the first level can lose it on entering the second. And vice-versa, that which was originally inert can become alive when put into relation with something else. [20]

The challenge for the director when working on the expressive level of the dramaturgy is to give enough information to the spectators to enable them to find their own meanings, without the performance generating all the meaning for them. The aim is often to create an action with a multiplicity of meanings and possible interpretations, but without losing the thread that lends coherence to the whole performance. The expressive level leads and misleads. It gives the spectators enough information for them to be able to find *their* way, but it does not show them *the* way.

The possibility of working first on the pre-expressive level and then on the expressive level of a performance provides a chronological structure to the following documentation of the rehearsal process. But *Kaosmos* was not made only on one level and then on the other. The scenes developed at different paces so that the two levels were worked on alongside each other and often the process of work on the two levels could be repeated. And, most importantly, both levels are present and imperceptibly linked in the finished performance. The finished performance is impossible to dissect retrospectively into the pre-expressive and expressive levels. The spectator can never

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20 'El Caballo de Plata. Seminario per Danzatori e Coreografi', p. 335.

perceive the pre-expressive level of the dramaturgy, because it will automatically express something to them. Here we meet the moment of paradox. The pre-expressive level is expressive and the better an action functions at the pre-expressive level, the more expressive it is likely to be. This is why it is useful to think of the pre-expressive level only in terms of the process and not in terms of the finished performance. All the technical work based on the pre-expressive principles is maintained in performance, but it is no longer visible. What was once a scenically alive, but abstract action, has become meaningful and expressive through its new context. Franco Ruffini explains:

> *La pre-expression se tient derrière l'expression comme une prèsence cachèe (...)*
>
> *La pre-expression est active dans l'expression. Elle n'est pas une partie isolable de l'expression mais elle y participe, à la lettre elle en fait partie.*
>
> Pre-expression stays behind expression like a hidden presence (...)
>
> Pre-expressivity is active within expressivity. It is *not* isolatable from expressivity, but it participates in it, to the letter, it is part of it.[21]

Thus it is only useful and indeed possible to talk of the pre-expressive level in terms of the process and not of the finished performance. The process is, however, based on this theatrical dichotomy - the relationship and interdependence of the pre-expressive and expressive levels. In other words, the actor (who does) and the character (who is perceived), the actual and the fictive.

A Theatrical Dichotomy

In an article on the nature of theatre David George cites the ambiguity between the actual and the fictive as the basis of the theatrical experience;

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21 Franco Ruffini, 'Le milieu-scene: pre-expression, energie, presence', *L'energie de l'acteur - Anthropologie Theatrale* (2), Bouffoneries n.15/16, p.37.

Our culture is characterized by a yearning to arrive at last at some state beyond paradox, some return to an original womb of rounded wholeness (...)

The suspect status of the theatre and all paratheatrical performances throughout our history is that they consistently subvert this whole ambition, endlessly creating new 'doubles' and thus new doubts, restlessly exposing the world as one which is dynamic and creative only in being clefted. I do not mean only in its selection for its plots and characters of conflicts nor even the doubled perception of characters as both actors and roles, or props and sets as both objects and signs: the subversion is more basic, ontological: all performances create a here which is not 'here', a now which is not 'now', restlessly slicing time and space into layers of 'difference'. [22]

Barba's whole approach is based on these 'illicit' transgressions. He writes:

> The work of more than twenty years with ODIN TEATRET has led me to a series of practical solutions: not to take the differences between what is called 'dance' and what is called 'theatre' too much into consideration; not to accept the character as the unit of measure of the performance; not to make the sex of the actor automatically coincide with the sex of the character. [23]

Working at the pre-expressive level basically means to work on the actors, their actual actions, real time, real space. The expressive level, on the other hand, is concerned with the character, and the fictive time and space. Though the spectator's suspension of disbelief provides an illusory wholeness when watching a performance, the possibility of working separately on the pre-expressive and the expressive levels is based in the fundamental theatrical dichotomy between actor and character, real time and space and fictive time and space.

The dichotomy between actor and character in *Kaosmos* is personified by Iben, a woman, who wears a beautiful blue skirt and plays a man. The spectators are made aware of this dichotomy right from the beginning of the performance, when each character is presented as a fiction played by the actor: 'Iben plays the man from the country...etc.'. As David George says; 'performer training focuses its techniques not

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22 David George, 'On Ambiguity: Towards a Post-Modern Performance Theory', *Theatre Research International*, vol.14, n.1, (Spring 1989), p.78.

23 Eugenio Barba, *Judith* programme.

on making one person into another, but in permitting the performer to act in-between identities; in this sense performing is a paradigm of liminality.' [24]

The dichotomy between the real and the fictive time and space is highlighted in *Kaosmos* by Torgeir's character, who is always questioning his own existence by challenging the suspension of disbelief required for the fictive to become real. He asks: 'I just crushed some corn, was that a real action, or was it theatrical fiction?' And like the White Rabbit, in *Alice in Wonderland*, he repeatedly pulls out a pocket watch and checks the time for everybody, indicating the schism between real and fictive time, the world of the characters and world of the spectators (and the actors). And near the end of the performance, in answer to Torgeir's questioning, Jan explains; 'Yes. This is theatre. A series of tricks and deceptions. The character dies and the actor returns to life.'

The spectator is left with the discomfort of being unable to disentangle the real from the fictive, or the pre-expressive from the expressive.

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24 'On Ambiguity: Towards a Post-Modern Performance Theory', p.78.

MONTAGE

The techniques relating to the pre-expressive and expressive levels, which take the performance from the abstract to the meaningful, are entirely linked to the work on the montage of the performance. The principles relating to these two different, but inherently linked fields, form the basis of the whole rehearsal process. The pre-expressive and expressive levels can be said to be concerned with the quality of the material used in the performance, as well as its interaction, whereas montage is concerned only with the interaction of the material. All theatre works with montage: the combination of the different scenic elements of text, actions, lights, costumes, music etc.. But there is a difference between a performance that begins with a narrative, which is served by these combined elements, and a performance, like *Kaosmos*, that begins with the montage and whose narrative grows out of the combination of these elements.

The process of *Kaosmos* was like a series of ever-finer filters which the material was passed through, resulting in separate elements which were then recombined into a far more refined compound. The process used *bricolage* - each new element causing another one to become attached or detached, in a ceaseless process of non-linear development.

Montage is the key to the process, not only of *Kaosmos*, but of most Odin Teatret performances. It is used to structure everything from the microcosms of the actors' actions up to the macrocosm of the finished performance. Towards the end of

the rehearsal period Barba said; 'Montage is my creative Everest. *Kaosmos* has no story or theme, only a dynamic.' [1]

Kaosmos does have stories and themes, but they are so fragmented and elusive that it is not they that engage the spectator. The spectator is not held by a desire to know 'what happens next....'. Rather the rhythm of the montage plays on their senses in such a way as to engage their 'kinesthetic curiosity'. Ian Watson, in his book on the work of Odin Teatret, writes; 'Barba's performance texts are based on an apparent opposition: narrative fragmentation (i.e., lack of conventional unifying devices) versus visual/aural cohesion. The power of his dramaturgy lies in the tension between the two.' [2]

And Nicola Savarese describes this tension in *Kaosmos* when he speaks of the:

scene simultanee nell'intreccio di storie in fondo semplici.

simultaneous scenes in the weave of basically simple stories. [3]

As Taviani says, the stories told are simple, it is how they are told that is complex. Chronologically speaking the process of developing the dense montage occurred in three stages:

a) The microcosmic montage - the fixing of the actions of each performer into a sequence.

b) The macrocosmic montage - the combination of two or more of these sequences with each other and with other scenic elements.

c) The spectator's montage - the montage the spectator creates when watching the performance, by choosing what to watch and when.

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1 Leo Sykes, 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*', (unpublished text, Denmark, 1992-1993).

2 Ian Watson, *Towards a Third Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.103.

3 Nicola Savarese, 'Trent'anni di 'Kaosmos': Sette Argomenti sull'Odin Teatret', (unpublished manuscript, Italy, 1994), p.8.

c) The spectator's montage - the montage the spectator creates when watching the performance, by choosing what to watch and when.

The microcosmic montage

This is the work on the single actions of the individual actor. The process begins with a dissection of the material the actor presents to the director. This material is made through improvisation and is a fixed sequence of physical and/or vocal actions called a 'score' (a term taken from music). This fixed score is the material that the actors present to the director. Julia describes this aspect of the process:

> When working on a performance at the Odin the actor must create a sequence of actions in space, based on a text, theme, image or technical task which she must then be able to repeat. We call this sequence a score (...) A score can be created by making one action at a time in the space and then putting them together, or by improvising. The essential thing is to be able to fix the score in its minutest details so that you can always repeat it exactly. The score is the material, a block of marble which you present to the director. The actor and director sculpt the marble in order to extract the statue. [4]

The first stage of the montage requires an *a priori* breaking down of these scores into composite elements. Barba writes:

> Without a preliminary de-composition, there is no orientation in the work, there are no parts which one can then cause to interact, one is unable to proceed by trial and error: no composition is possible. The necessity of decomposition is evident when one begins working on the 'materials' of the performance. The process which leads to the final unity - in which it should no longer be possible to distinguish between the different levels and the separate fragments - actually begins with a decomposition into fragments (scenes, sequences, microsequences) and a differentiation between levels (the actions of each individual actor, the relationships, the physical and vocal actions, the time and space of the performance, the visual and sonorous montage.) [5]

Depending on how well the score is already functioning and how much variety and detail it already contains, Barba will either leave it whole, perhaps working in

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4 *The Dead Brother*, work demonstration with Julia Varley.

5 Eugenio Barba, 'Four Spectators', *TDR*, T125, (Spring 1990), p.98-99.

detail on a few elements, or he will deconstruct the whole sequence of actions and, together with the actor, elaborate these and reconstruct them into a new score.

The older actors' scores were therefore mostly left intact at this stage, only undergoing small changes, as they had themselves already applied the pre-expressive criteria to their material before presenting it to Barba. As Ferdinando Taviani has remarked, nowadays Barba works mainly on a '*dramatugi af dramaturgi*', a 'dramaturgy of dramaturgies',[6] the older actors having to a large extent directed their own material at this first stage. This is not however the case with the younger and less experienced actors, whose material Barba worked on in great detail.

Barba views everything the actors present, not as a finished piece of material to be fitted in or fitted around, but as a piece of living matter to be crafted into a final shape. He cuts and de-contextualizes, then edits together and re-contextualizes their material in whatever way is required. In this way the actors' series of actions, their scores, are elaborated.

The purpose of the micro-montage is to create a living piece of material, that can surprise and engage the spectator at the kinesthetic level. All the dead wood needs cutting away and all that is left needs intensifying. Everything in theatre needs to be condensed and concise. As Brook says, 'If in life it takes two people three hours to say something, on stage it takes three minutes.' [7] Editing and montage are the means by which this can be achieved.

Grotowski draws attention to the technical problems the actor and director can encounter at this stage of the work. He describes the edits they must make, and how to resolve these into a new series of actions; 'You must make cuts, and then succeed in

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6 Eugenio Barba, *De Flydende Øer* (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1989), p.256.

7 Peter Brook, *There are no Secrets* (Britain: Methuen,1993), p.10.

putting the different fragments together (...) It's like the cinema: the moving sequence stops at a photogram - cut - a photogram starts a new moving sequence.' [8]

He goes on to discuss the difficulties the fact of editing may cause: once the physical score is cut, it will no longer fit together with the accompanying vocal score. A song, for example, cannot be edited in the same way as a physical score, as the melody would be broken, the lyrics would become incoherent. Another problem is what to do with the holes left in between the actions. Grotowski writes:

> But then what do you do with the 'cut', the 'hole'? For example, at the first stop, you may be standing up with your arms raised, and at the second stop you are sitting down with your arms lowered. Then one possible solution is to pass from one position to another by means of a technical demonstration of ability, almost a ballet, a game of skill. This is one of many possibilities. [9]

When the director requires such transformations of the physical score the actors inevitably also have to adjust the inner stories of their actions. But Barba never gets involved in this. At Odin Teatret it is the actors' responsibility to find their own justifications for what they are doing, even when their scores have been radically altered by Barba. Torgeir describes his way of collaborating with Barba at this stage of the process:

> Every time Eugenio asked me to make a change in the outer action - changes I wrote down - I immediately changed my inner sequence of actions and wrote down the new montage. And it was this new montage that I concentrated on remembering. [10]

There is the inevitable period, before the actors have 'reinhabited' and remembered the changed score, in which their actions become mechanical and lifeless. But the actor cannot allow the score to exist only as a shell, as the material would become dead and lose its precision, so they must reinvest it with life as soon as

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8 Jerzy Grotowski, 'Tu es le fils de quelqu'un', *TDR* T115 (Fall 1987), p.38-39

9 'Tu es le fils de quelqu'un', p.39.

10 Erik Exe Christoffersen, *The Actor's Way* (London: Routledge,1993), p.47.

possible. Because of his reliance on the actors' ability to do this Barba began the rehearsals for *Kaosmos* by explaining to the actors (but most specifically to the younger actors) that they would have to master certain technical tasks, such as how to fit their individual material together with that of the others, as the collective rhythm of the performance began to be built. He told them that as this happened they would lose their own inner-logics, but that they would have to reinvent these, as they were what gave them their precision and made them believable.

Equally the director needs to know how to get what s/he wants from the actors without destroying their creative independence. Barba says:

> The director's problem is how to shape something from the outside without uprooting it. The director needs to shape the external form without destroying the mental actions of performer. The director must shape things while the performer keeps what is fundamental to him/her. [11]

This does not necessarily mean there is a limit to how much the director can manipulate the actors' physical and vocal material without destroying it, but rather that both must recognize the limits of their two separate fields of responsibility.

The purpose of the microcosmic montage is to make sure that the actors' material, the threads of the performance, are strong in their own right and that they will not disintegrate and thereby weaken the overall weave of the performance. This is the moment in which Barba is able to 'manipulate' the actors' material in order to make it function, to make it scenically alive.

Only once the individual scores have been elaborated and fixed is the process ready to go onto the next stage, in which the director puts the scores into context with those of other actors. As Else-Marie, one of the founding actors of the Odin, says;

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11 Leo Sykes, 'Director's Workshop Notes', run by The Centre for Performance Research (unpublished text, Cardiff, 1990).

'Eugenio works on improving the actor's expression, which then later can be woven together with or put in relationship to other actions.'[12]

The macrocosmic montage

Once the newly elaborated scores have been fixed they are ready to interact with each other. Barba describes this next step:

> If the performer's actions can be considered as analogous to strips of film which are already the result of a montage, it is possible to use this montage not as a final result but as a material for further montage. This is generally the task of the director, who can weave the actions of several performers into a succession in which one action seems to answer another, or into a simultaneous assembling in which the meanings of both actions derive directly from the fact of their being co-present. [13]

Again, the actors must be able to maintain the precision of their actions, even when put into a new context that changes the meaning they have given their actions. They must be able to do this because Barba is not working on the meanings of their actions, but on the scenic life of their actions. Barba writes:

> In general, if one says to a performer that her/his action can remain intact while its context (and therefore its meaning) is completely changed, then s/he thinks that s/he is being treated as inert matter, manipulated by the director. As if it was the sense that made the action *real* and not the quality of the action's energy.[14]

Early in the process of *Kaosmos* Barba created the basic structure of the performance by linking the microcosmic montages of the single performers, into a long sequence. He explained that it was not the meaning of this montage that was important, but the dynamics it contained:

> The montage of the scenes that I have created now was improvised, there was no particular reason for it (...) You must create with the left and right sides of the brain so you have both the logical and the illogical. The right side of the brain must always ask 'Why?' (...) Each scene is like a microcosmic performance. It

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12 *The Actor's Way*, p.94

13 Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* (London: Routledge,1991), p.160.

14 Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe* (London: Routledge,1995), p.87.

> must all function very technically, impulses, rhythms etc. - then the material becomes really alive. You can work on the material on this level before you know the story you want to tell (...) for now I am creating the montage according to the same technical requirements as those of the training. It must be believable and function, and this is achieved through the impulses and rhythms etc.. [15]

The process of creating first a micro-montage and then combining it into the macro-montage finds strong parallels in the work of other directors. Thomas Richards, Grotowski's assistant, describes how Grotowski combined his score, a dance, into a scene with other actors:

> In the montage of the 'Main *Action*', he inserted this dance into the structure in a specific relation with someone else's different line of actions. I had to keep the same dance with its intention, but now the situation around me had changed. [16]

And it is a methodology here also seen in Brook's work:

> Peter works like a sculptor. He makes one beautifully shaped piece, maybe in the form of a cube. Then he makes another shaped like a sphere. He looks at these two pieces and decides where they need to be in relation to each other. Perhaps the sphere needs to be on top of the cube, or vice versa. When all of the pieces have been assembled together, like a collage, a sense of meaning and unity emerges. [17]

The montaged 'cubes' and 'spheres' in *Kaosmos* are so intricately interrelated that it is virtually impossible to distinguish between them in the finished performance. A song follows an action which is overlaid with a text which transforms through a light change. Nicola Savarese, a theatre scholar and close collaborator of Odin Teatret writes about *Kaosmos*:

> *Come negli altri spettacoli dell'Odin intravedo in 'Kaosmos' un ordine ma non un ordine di fila: le azioni si srotolano simultaneamente, secondo una messinscena che sembra caotica e invece é cosmica: e proprio non potevano trovarlo un titolo migliore, per definire questa voritcosa dramaturgia (il disordine dell'universo mondo) che mescola le storie, le lingue, i personaggi in un affresco denso di prospettive. Sembra una storia e invece é un viaggio nel tempo.*

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15 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*'.

16 Thomas Richards, *At Work With Grotowski On Physical Actions* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.63-64.

17 Yoshi Oida with Lorna Marshall, *An Actor Adrift* (Britain: Methuen,1992), p.16.

> In 'Kaosmos', as in the other Odin performances, I can sense an order, but not a linear order: the actions unravel simultaneously, according to a mise-en-scene that seems chaotic, but is in fact cosmic. And they really could not have found a better title to define this dramaturgical vortex (the confusion of the universe) which mixes stories, languages and characters in a fresco dense with perspectives. It seems to be a story and instead it is a journey in time. [18]

In making *Kaosmos* the process of creating first the microcosmic montage and then the macrocosmic montage proceeded, for the most part, in this chronological order, the relationship between the two, however, is highly symbiotic. On the one hand it is the macro-montage, not its component parts, that determines the finished product, just as Fritjof Capra here defines this relationship in the world of science:

> At the subatomic level the interrelations and interactions between the parts of the whole are more fundamental than the parts themselves. [19]

But, on the other hand, it is the parts themselves that in many ways determine the montage, as not all combinations function. Peter Brook elucidates this fact:

> Let's take an explosion as an example. If mixed according to very precise specifications, a certain number of elements will explode, whereas the same elements, combined in a different way, won't do anything at all. [20]

Barba explores this relationship between the individual parts and the overall composition. For him the actors' material is a piece of potential, it is not a product. In other words different combinations of the same material can be used in the creation of different scenes and meanings. In *The Secret Art of the Performer* Barba shows two series of photographs, each depicting a different actor carrying out a sequence of actions. He demonstrates how these actions can be used to create different scenes, depending on the order in which they are combined and what other elements they are added to. He writes:

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18 'Trent'anni di 'Kaosmos': Sette Argomenti sull'Odin Teatret', p.5.

19 Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society and the Rising Culture* (London: Flamingo,1982), p.83.

20 Jean Kalman, interviews Brook, Peter 'Any Event Stems from Combustion: Actors, Audiences and Theatrical Energy', *NTQ*, vol.VIII, n.30, (May 1992), p.107.

> The two sequences provided by the two performers, in spite of their different motivations, in spite of the original contexts, can be mounted together. We will thus obtain a new sequence whose meaning will depend on the new context into which it is put. [21]

In 1978, in beginning work on the new performance *Brecht's Ashes*, Barba experimented with the idea of using the same material to create two different performances. He said:

> *Se utilizzassimo - secondo il progetto che avevamo fatto - i materiali del Millione anche per lo spettacolo Brecht, sarebbe facile.*
>
> It would be easy - as we had planned - to use the material of *The Million* also for making the performance about Brecht. [22]

Later he did precisely this, when, in 1991, he used the actors' material from *Talabot*, the group performance that had just finished playing, in order to create the performance *Klubauterfolket* for the Holstebro Festive Week 1991. This was primarily a pragmatic solution to the lack of time available. By using old material as a starting point they were able to cut out the first step of work on the actors' material, the microcosmic montage. Needless to say the new performance bore no resemblance to the old one. The actors' material became unrecognizable as soon as it was put into a new sequence and given a new context and the material also changed very rapidly as it adapted to its new circumstances.

Following the montage of the actor (micro-montage) and the montage of the director (macro-montage), comes the montage of the spectator.

The spectator's montage

Marco de Marinis, a theatre scholar and participant of ISTA, writes:

> 1) We can speak of a dramaturgy of the spectator in a passive or, more precisely, objective sense in which we conceive of the audience as a dramaturgical object, a

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21 *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, p.162

22 Eugenio Barba, *Il Brecht dell'Odin* (Milan:Ubulibri,1981), p.142.

mark or target for the actions/operations of the director, the performers, and, if there is one, the writer.

2) We can also speak of a dramaturgy of the spectator in an active or subjective sense, referring to the various receptive operations/actions that an audience carries out: perception, interpretation, aesthetic appreciation, memorization, emotive and intellectual response etc.(...) These operations/actions of the audience's members are to be considered truly dramaturgical (not just metaphorically) since it is only through these actions that the performance text achieves its fullness, becoming realized in all its semantic and communicative potential. [23]

The Odin approaches the spectator in the latter of these two ways, turning the spectator into a creator. The means by which the spectator is made to become their own editor is based in the way the performance is structured. Eisenstein, the Russian film director, writes:

> It is the *montage* principle, as distinct from one of *representation*, which makes the spectator create and which arouses in him that intensity of inner creative excitement which distinguishes an emotionally exciting work from the informative logic of a plain statement recording events. [24]

The following spectator's account of *Min Fars Hus* (written by a theatre critic) could equally be a review of *Kaosmos*. It shows how montage and multiplicity lie at the very core of what could be called the Odin Teatret methodology:

> The tale that Odin Teatret tells and shows their audience is complex, dynamic and sometimes confusing and elliptical. Moreover, it is a collage of many tales that never allows us to rest confident with one image, one voice, one perspective. Odin's nine actors turn the playing space into an environment, a field of tension in which events happen separately and simultaneously at various places, accompanied or interrupted by musical sketches and extraordinary visual stimulii (...) Nothing seems accidental; one quickly becomes aware of the actor's precise use of space and their bodies in space, and how they create and juxtapose themselves and the historical and fictional characters they play in an ever-widening circle of allusions, kinesthetic rhythms and sound and body images. [25]

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23 Marco de Marinis, 'Dramaturgy of the Spectator', *TDR* Vol.31, n.2, T114, (Summer 1987), p.101.

24 Sergej Eisenstein, *Notes of a Film Director* (New York: Dover publications,1970), p.79.

25 Johannes Birringer, *Theatre, Theory, Postmodernism* (Bloomington.: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.157.

In *Kaosmos* the use of *bricolage*, juxtaposition, interweaving and simultaneous montage all require the spectator to become engaged not only in their own generation of meaning, but in the construction of their own performance. They must choose what to look at and create their own connections and meanings for what they have just seen.

Barba often exploits a juxtaposition of opposing elements as a means of shocking his audience, not only into paying constant attention to the unpredictable action, but also of stimulating them to find their own answers and solutions to stories that are present, but not logically told or fully elucidated by the performance. The director's skill lies in knowing how to give the spectators the right stimulation and 'clues' in order to be able to arrive at their own conclusions and not just be bewildered by the host of contrasting and apparently unconnected actions. The director must give them a key to the chaos. As Grotowski says:

> If all of the elements of the performance are elaborated and correctly assembled (the montage), an effect appears in the perception of the spectator, a vision, a certain story; to some degree the performance appears not on the stage but in the perception of the spectator. [26]

And Barba cites Dario Fo in order to illustrate how much of the montage occurs in the mind of the spectators:

> Dario Fo, when he explains the principles according to which he designs his own scenic presence, speaks of zooms, background shots, wide shots, close-ups, reverse shots. He imagines a film camera, in the brain of each spectator. The performer must know how to direct his camera, sending the correct impulses, so that the spectator can change 'lens' and the angle of the 'shot'. He adds that the spectator is not aware of this complicated montage of different points of view. It is the montage, however, which makes the action precise, alive, and interesting.[27]

Odin Teatret's performances belong to the post-modernist genre of theatre, in which the linear narrative has been replaced by a disjointed combination of scenic elements. However, the Odin have not renounced their roles as story-tellers, unlike

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26 *At Work With Grotowski On Physical Actions*, p.119-120.

27 *The Paper Canoe*, p.126.

some of their contemporaries, for whom all notion of story-telling has disappeared. As in the work of Robert Wilson, who says of his work:

> You don't have to think about the story, because there isn't any. You don't have to listen to words, because the words don't mean anything. You just enjoy the scenery, the architectural arrangements in time and space, the music, the feelings they all evoke. [28]

In *Kaosmos* there are inherent and directorially determined meanings, and even though these are often highly obscured, the spectators are not totally abandoned in its medley of images and sounds. Barba employs the montage not only as a way of engaging the spectators, but of guiding them as well. He writes:

> Montage is fundamental with regard to the effect the actions must have on the spectator. It guides the spectator's senses through the dramatic (performance) fabric (text), letting the spectator experience the performance text. The director guides, divides and reassembles the spectator's attention by means of the performer's actions, the words of the text, the relationships, the music, the sounds, the lights, the use of props.[29]

Barba, therefore, uses all the different scenic elements in the creation of his montage. There is, for example, a strongly dramaturgical level at which the set facilitates montage.

Set as montage

Kaosmos is played on the traverse, with the spectators seated on both sides of a long, thin rectangular playing space. Barba uses the long space to create cuts in the action, causing a change in scenes merely by distracting the spectators' attention from one end of the stage to the other. Thus the set becomes the director's means of keeping the action moving, but equally it becomes a way of actively involving the spectators in the

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28 Laurence Shyer, *Robert Wilson and his Collaborators* (New York: Theatre Communications Group,1981), p.XV.

29 *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology,* p.160.

process of creation, as they effectively 'edit' their own performance, by choosing which parts of the action to look at.

The spectators' choice of where to sit (front row, back row, middle, at one end or the other, on the left or right side of the stage) will give them an entirely different perspective on events, foregrounding certain details, causing them to miss others and generally showing the hidden face of what the spectators on the opposite side are seeing. Where the spectators sit therefore determines a lot about how they read the performance and what choices they make in terms of where to place their attention. The shape of the set, and the fact that the performance is not played end on, also frustrates the spectators' desire of seeing all and understanding the whole. It physically prohibits them from getting an overall view and obliges them to miss some of the action, thus they can never 'possess' the performance and consequently it is common for a spectator to see an Odin performance more than once. Nicola Savarese writes of *Kaosmos*:

> *La sensazione che più mi disorienta come spetatore dell'Odin: non tanto il non comprendere il significato di quanto sta accadendo ma capire che da un'altra parte, appena poco più in là del luogo in cui ho fissi gli occhi, qualcosa d'altro accade, è già accaduto, ma ne ho preso atto troppo tardi. Non riuscirò più a cogliere 'ciò che è accaduto'. Questa è la sicurezza che come spettatore sento minacciata: non una semplice incomprensione dei contenuti (chi sarò mai io da capire tutto, da voler comprendere tutto?) ma il fatto di veder fuggire la realtà, e il tempo, proprio sotto gli occhi e di non poterne cogliere il mutamento il divenire.*
>
> The sensation that most disorientates me as a spectator of the Odin is not so much the not understanding of the meaning of what is happening, but the realization that on another part of the stage, just outside my range of vision, something else is happening, has already happened, but I realized it too late. I will no longer be able to capture 'that which has happened'. This, as a spectator, is the security that is threatened: not a simple understanding of the content (who am I to understand everything, to want to understand everything?) but the fact of seeing reality and time escape, right before my eyes, and to not be able to capture the change, the becoming. [30]

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30 'Trent'anni di 'Kaosmos': Sette Argomenti sull'Odin Teatret', p.7.

And Janne Risum, another theatre scholar and long term spectator of the Odin performances, writes of her various viewings of *Kaosmos*; 'If I had taken the trouble to write out in full my impressions each time, I would have collected a series of five different performance texts from five different points of view.' [31]

In addition to the set, sound can also be used very effectively as a way of directing the spectators' attention.

Sound as montage

A general stage picture can be created by not focusing the sound in one place, but allowing it to be spread around the space, as for instance in a group song. This aural effect creates an equivalent of the filmic long-shot. Equally sound can be used to create a close-up. This is achieved, in *Kaosmos* when, for example, Tina lets a free-standing door-frame crash to the floor. The sound of the crash causes the spectators' attention to jump from a general stage picture to a highly specific focus on Tina, as she lies down in the fallen door-frame.

Sound also greatly facilitates simultaneous montage. Actions can take place simultaneously in different parts of the stage but if one action were to be silent and the other noisy, there would be little tension between the two. The spectators would give their undivided attention to the noisy action, perhaps even failing to notice the silent one. This is because the spectator is only able to see one action at a time, and the moment in which they stop looking at one image in preference to another, they have made their choice and the tension between the two images lessens. But this choice cannot happen with sound. The spectator can always hear all sound, and cannot chose

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31 Janne Risum, 'Kaosmos', (unpublished manuscript, Denmark, 1993), p.48.

to hear only a part of the sound. This means that even when the spectator chooses to focus on one action as opposed to another, their awareness of the other action, and therefore the tension between the two actions, will remain because they can still hear it.

Techniques Of Montage

The three levels of micro-, macro- and spectator montage are achieved through different techniques and stylistic choices. Essentially all montage is to do with the rhythmic combination of elements in time and space. Montage in space is achieved through simultaneous montage and montage in time is achieved through sequential montage. In the work of Odin Teatret the overall dramaturgy of the performance is based in the combination of and balance between simultaneous and sequential montage. Barba writes:

> Actions at work (dramaturgy) live by means of the balance between the concatenation pole and the simultaneity pole. There is a risk of this life being lost with the loss of tension between the two poles.
>
> While the loss of balance for the sake of weaving through concatenation draws a play into the somnolence of comfortable recognizability, the loss of balance for the sake of interweaving in the simultaneity dimension brings about a falling into arbitrariness, chaos. Or into incoherent incoherence.[32]

In *Kaosmos* there is always more than one actor on stage (except at the very beginning when there is only Jan, and the very end when there is only Roberta), therefore the stage picture is always based in simultaneous montage. This does not, however, mean that simultaneity is always the primary mode of construction. Barba shifts between the simultaneous and the sequential, depending on whether he wants to diffuse or focus the spectators' attention. Sometimes he causes the spectators to focus

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32 Eugenio Barba, 'The Nature of Dramaturgy: Describing Actions at Work', *NTQ*, vol. I, n.1, (February 1985), p.78.

on the single actor/event, dropping the others from their centre of attention. In this way he creates an equivalent of the filmic close-up by repressing the simultaneous situation (the other actors are present, they are just not noticeable). At other moments he will purposefully exploit simultaneity, creating the filmic long-shot, in which the spectators' vision is opened out to take in the different events occurring within the whole stage picture and thereby causing the spectators to become their own editors.

Sequential montage

Sequential montage creates a sequence of individually occurring actions. Sequential montage is the means by which the action progresses in time.

Rhythm is one of the most important aspects of sequential montage, as it decides when and how one scene/action will follow another. It is the rhythm of a performance, rather than the story it is telling, that makes it interesting to watch. Meyerhold writes:

> A performance of a play is an alternation of dynamic and static moments, as well as dynamic moments of different kinds (...) That is why the gift of the rhythm seems to me one of the most important a director can have. [33]

And Barba further elucidates this:

> The concept of montage does not only imply a composition of words, images, or relationships. Above all, it implies the montage of rhythm, but not in order to represent or to reproduce the movement. By means of the montage of rhythm, in fact, one aims at the very principle of motion, at tensions, at the dialectic process of nature or thought. [34]

Rhythm determines the internal dynamic of each scene. There are certain rhythms that bring actions/scenes to life. Slowing scenes/actions down, or speeding them up can make them become scenically alive, but it also affects their meaning.

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33 Robert Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold* (Cambridge: C.U.P.,1989), p.112.

34 *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, p.158

> Meyerhold came to think of rhythm in the theatre rather as (...) a major means by which the artist 'deforms' his subject matter. Each component is subjected to the rhythm, which is thus not merely an organizing agent but has a direct impact upon the meaning as well. [35]

The same action can be turned into a caress or slap either by slowing it down or speeding it up. Equally a text spoken rapidly may convey a sense of urgency, or of disinterest if spoken slowly. In between the two extremes of fast and slow lie the almost imperceptible micro-changes in rhythm that keep the actions interesting to watch.

Rhythm also determines how the actions and scenes will be linked to each other. The overall dramaturgy of *Kaosmos* is constructed with a fluidity that nevertheless contradicts its own flow, slow scenes following fast ones, tragic scenes following comic ones, text scenes following song scenes etc.. The spectators must not be disturbed by these changes, but engaged by them. In this way rhythm helps keep the spectators' attention. It turns the performance into a constantly changing pattern. If a performance is one long calm sequence the spectator is likely to fall asleep, equally if the performance is an incessant line of explosions the spectator is likely to 'block out' in a form of mental self-defence.

Another variation the director must choose between when creating the sequential montage is between the 'smooth' and the 'harsh cut'. The 'smooth cut' aims to link all its elements seamlessly, whereas the 'harsh cut' juxtaposes contrasting elements creating a visible schism. Barba creates an interplay between both these styles.

The 'smooth cut' is a school of cutting that has gone from Stanislavski to contemporary traditional theatre and Hollywood. It seeks to obscure the montage by

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35 *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, p.112.

smoothing out the links between the combined elements. Its aim is to maintain the naturalistic illusion by not drawing attention to the artificiality (and therefore the structure) of the performance.

In the school of the 'smooth cut' the links between scenes and actions are invisible and the whole is linked by causality and given a narrative coherence. The structure of the piece is subservient to the story as the narrative decides the action.

> The poetics of Hollywood cinema is fundamentally Aristotelian. We are given dramatic actions in which everything is precisely plotted to exploit to the full the interweaving of consecutiveness and causality in the construction of the story. [36]

And Stanislavski also maintains this sense of consecutive unity in his works. In his *Director's Diary* for *Ghosts* he writes; 'every tiny detail, including sound effects, should point in the same direction.' [37]

Continuity can be achieved through the narrative or themes, but more often than not, in the work of Odin Teatret, a scene change consists in a rupture of the narrative, and a jump in time and space, to another thread of the overall weave. In these cases a 'smooth cut' can, however, be achieved by not breaking or ending all the elements of the scene at the same time, but allowing elements to fade in and out at different moments or speeds. This creates fluidity, while avoiding predictability. Barba generally achieves the 'smooth cut' through overlap. The cracks are papered over and the point of transition is obscured. Elements from within the scenes create the overlapping links which can be something as simple and minimal as a piece of music, or the continued action of a single character. An example, in *Kaosmos*, of a

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36 Roy Armes, *Action and Image: Dramatic Structure in Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p.107

37 Kim Yongsoo, 'Montage Theory as a Tool for Analysis of Theatre History and Practice' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Georgia, 1922), p.44.

single continuous element that links three different scenes together is when Jan plays one long scene, while all the other actors play three short ones:

1) Jan lies down and Torgeir and Tina place the door (a free-standing door in a frame) on his back. The other actors are stationary.

2) Jan continues to lie under the door as all the others dance and sing around the whole space.

3) The others all stop dancing and sit on the benches at either end of the space. Jan opens the door and and comes out from under it.

Jan goes from being the major focus in the first scene, to a minor one in the second scene and returns to being a major focus in the third scene. Throughout the three scenes he retains the same 'narrative' and though the others go through three separate scenes, his personal dramaturgy is that of a single scene with a beginning - having the door put on his back, a middle - lying in wait under the door, and an end - opening the door and coming out from under it. While Jan is the element that 'papers over the cracks', creating a 'smooth cut' between the scenes, all the other actors jump from scene to scene through a 'harsh cut', as they play the scenes slow-fast-slow, changing rhythm instantaneously and without warning.

The 'harsh cut' has become one of the major tools of montage, both in practice and in theory, through the works of Meyerhold and Eisenstein. With Meyerhold the 'harsh cut' became an active element. The linkage between scenes and actions was no longer to be obscured so that the naturalistic illusion might be maintained. Now incongruous combinations and unfilled gaps became essential ingredients.

> The usual naturalistic method of play construction is to erect a seamless edifice of concrete or plaster or anything which tries to conceal the 'joins'. In Meyerhold's

> theatre, each episode was complete in itself and was played as an independent turn. [38]

And Eisenstein, who had originally trained in theatre with Meyerhold, was to continue this aesthetic of discontinuity:

> Instead of linking shots in smooth sequences Eisenstein held that a proper film continuity should proceed by a series of shocks: that each cut should give rise to a conflict between the shots being spliced and thereby create a fresh impression in the spectator's mind.[39]

And so, again it is confirmed that montage becomes the means of not only engaging the spectators, but of turning them into a creative force. The 'harsh cut' presents the spectators with the dichotomy of juxtaposed, opposing elements. It requires them to fill in the gaps in the action with their imaginations.

The 'harsh cut', in the work of Odin Teatret, does not go so far as to create ruptures that expose the seams and artificiality of the performance. All the violent juxtapositions happen within the context and world created by the performance. Iben believes that, as a spectator; 'The production must be a universe and I must be convinced that its rules are right and internally logical, even if I don't understand them.'[40] Barba firmly weaves all the elements of the performance into the overall tapestry so that nothing stands apart as an unincorporated, auxiliary piece of action. All juxtapositions are softened or used in such a way that they do not shatter the illusion of the whole because 'harsh noticeable cuts tend to draw attention to technique and therefore tend to destroy the spectator's illusion of seeing a continuous stream of action.' [41] In this sense Barba returns to Stanislavski's concept of a performance that

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38 *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, p.121

39 Karel Reisz and Gavin Millar, *Film Editing* (London: Focal Press,1968), p.39.

40 *The Actor's Way* p.181.

41 *Film Editing,* p.48.

creates the illusion of being a self-sufficient reality through maintaining an inner coherence.

Simultaneous montage

In tandem with sequential montage, theatre also works with montage in space, simultaneous montage. Simultaneous montage is the combination of two or more actions that happen at the same time. It is the means by which the stage picture is composed and it encompasses everything that is taking place in any scene. Whereas sequential montage, in its purest form, can be used to produce clarity, simultaneous montage, in its extreme form, can be used in the generation of chaos. Simultaneity is a way of creating density. Barba:

> *La simultaneità ci permette di costruire una narrazione non lineare, di presentare dei contrasti, di muoverci a salti da una logica dall'altra.*
>
> Simultaneity allows us to construct a non-linear narrative, to present contrasts, to jump from one logic to another. [42]

The simultaneous pole's risk of creating chaos should not cause it to be sacrificed for the sake of clarity. Barba writes:

> To impoverish the simultaneity pole means to limit the possibility of making complex meanings arise out of the performance. These meanings derive not from a complex concatenation of actions, but from the weaving together of many dramatic actions, each one endowed with its own simple 'meaning', and the assembling of them by means of a single unity of time. Thus the meaning of a fragment of a play is not only determined by what precedes it and what will follow it, but also by a multiplitiy of facets whose three-dimensional presence, so to speak, makes it live in the present tense of a life of its own. [43]

Meaning results from the multi-faceted nature of each element and each element is defined by the context created by the others. Barba uses simultaneous montage to

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42 Eugenio Barba, 'El Caballo de Plata. Seminario per Danzatori e Coreografi', *Teatro e Storia*, Il Mulino, Milan, Anno V, n.2, (ottobre 1990), p.356.

43 'The Nature of Dramaturgy', p.77.

reveal not the essence but quite the contrary: the heterogenous nature of each action. Each aspect of the action is defined by the context the other elements create. Robert Wilson uses montage to much the same effect:

> Increasingly Wilson has come to think of juxtaposition as a perceptual aid, with each element helping one to see or hear the other more clearly. [44]

Whether complementary or contradictory, the different elements have to be effectively combined so that they do not become merged, but rather remain as the different faces of the prism. As Barba said, 'montage one action, shape, with another, but make the aspects be co-present so that they don't suffocate each other. Don't create a chaotic vertigo which destroys meaning.'[45]

Technically speaking simultaneous montage is concerned with dynamics in the space and can work in two ways. The first is with stationary composition, for example a tableau, in which the governing rules are those of spatial composition, and in this sense related to the principles of painting; spatial dynamic, a balance in the overall image, *chiaroscuro*, central and peripheral points of focus etc.. Eisenstein shows how this kind of static montage in space can be used in his analysis of El Greco's painting *View of Toledo* [46] . He shows how the painter falsifies the viewers' perspective in order to a) gain an ideal view, in which the large hospital in the foreground is visible, but it does not block out the town and b) the hospital's most beautiful facade is put facing the viewer, whereas it should not actually be visible from the given view-point. The kind of montage utilized by El Greco gives the painter/director the freedom to create a distorted, 'idealized' view (ideal in the sense

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44 *Robert Wilson and his Collaborators*, p.XVII.

45 Leo Sykes, 'Director's Workshop Notes', run by the Centre for Performance Research, (unpublished text, Cardiff, 1990).

46 As shown in *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, p.158-160.

that it is what the director wishes to show the spectator), of an otherwise dull, or not 'ideal' reality.

Simultaneous montage also draws on some of the pre-expressive principles of the performer. For example, a body can be composed of simultaneous oppositions, an arm points up while the eyes are cast downwards, the knees are introverted (turned in) while the palms of the hands are extroverted (open and facing out). This enables the static body to be nevertheless dynamic, a mass of opposing tensions, an interesting, ambiguous picture.

These same compositional rules can also be applied to a mobile choreography, in which the actors are not in a tableau, but moving around the space. Here it is the relationship of the actors to each other and to the space that is worked on. A general principle is that the stage should be balanced but dynamic. To be balanced means that the focus is not always on one part of the stage only. To make it dynamic means to give it different, simultaneous focus points, to vary entrances and exits, to keep the action moving around in the space, to surprise the spectator and make her choose where to look. At the Odin performances the spectators traditionally sit on both sides of the performance space, virtually surrounding the actors. Thus the 'choreography' has the density of three dimenstionality and requires the actors to be present with their whole body as they are being observed from all sides, at all times.

The simultaneous montage in *Kaosmos* is divided between what could be called moments of 'choral' action, 'group' action and 'individual' action.

a) 'Choral' action.

This is a group scene in which all the characters are simultaneously active, and yet the focus is not split, but has a centre. This kind of scene is harmonious and the group

functions as a chorus in order to convey a unanimous scene or 'reality': they are in the same fictive time and place and are engaged in the same fictive actions.

In choral action the whole is organised for the spectator, which means that the actors/actions/texts/music, either work as a chorus, or take place sequentially, with the different elements taking it in turns. This kind of montage is notable for its clarity and is used most frequently in *Kaosmos* in scenes where there is important textual information to be conveyed. In these scenes the actors stand in stationary tableaux, so that they do not detract from the text, while either one actor at a time moves and speaks/sings, or the group sings as a chorus.

'Choral' scenes are not necessarily text- or information-orientated. There is a choral scene in *Kaosmos* in which all the characters dance together. During certain moments of the dance they are all as active as each other, at other moments some of them take centre stage becoming the main focus, while the others restrict their dancing to the edges of the stage, becoming a peripheral focus. They are, however, all united by the action of dancing.

b) 'Group' action.

Group action is when some of the characters are engaged in the same action/scene, i.e. are operating in relation to each other within the same fictive time and space, while others of them are not. Thus two or more groups are created.

Group scenes are essentially constructed moments of counter-point and juxtaposition, in which one action acts as a foil to another action. This kind of scene exploits the simultaneous potential to the full. The fact that different fictive realities are contemporaneously present means that the time/space continuum is broken and the spectator is displaced by simultaneously occurring non-unified actions.

A 'group' action can have two different groups simultaneously on stage. This can be designed so that there is a main action, in which the majority of the actors are involved, which is then commented on by a separate, minor action. An example of this in *Kaosmos* is the scene in which all the music, light and actors (except Julia and Roberta) are at one end of the stage. Here Torgeir is the central focus, he rips and chews a veil, bandages his hands with it, strangles himself, grimaces and does a whole series of demonstratively grotesque actions while the others sing and play behind him. Julia and Roberta laugh and talk in the shadows at the other end. They are not, however, laughing at Torgeir - they are facing each other and appear to be engaged in an entirely private conversation. Without directly commenting on Torgeir, the fact that they ignore him undermines his angst. Torgeir becomes in some way comic, ridiculous, exaggerated, like some kind of self-appointed martyr.

c) 'Individual' actions.

In these scenes all the characters are engaged in independent activities and there is no perceived focus, the spectator cannot find out where they are meant to be looking, or what the scene is about. They can see that the actors are making precise actions, but everything is happening so fast and there is so much choice that their eyes flick about the stage, merely reacting to whichever action or sound attracts them at each given moment. Often these scenes create moments of chaos in which everything becomes disjointed and appears to go into double speed.

The main aim in using simultaneous montage is to create a split focus that causes the spectator to make choices. In 'choral' action the scene has a strong focus and the spectators' gaze is directed. In 'group' action there is a coherent and

perceivable juxtaposition of actions that comment on each other. In 'individual' action order is replaced by chaos and there is no specified focus to the action.

Kaosmos is built on a constant interplay of the different aspects of montage described here. However, montage is not only fundamental to the structure of the finished performance, it is also the essence of the process. The following chapters show how *Kaosmos* was actually created, and how the principles and theories discussed in these first two chapters, were put into practice.

LAUNCHING THE BOAT

Brook writes:

> In the early stages of rehearsal everything is open and I impose nothing at all. In a sense this is diametrically opposed to the technique in which, the first day, the director gives a speech on what the play's about and the way he's going to approach it. I used to do that years ago and eventually found out that that's a rotten way of starting. [1]

This chapter deals with the launch of the performance. It looks at how Barba approaches the work on a new performance and shows the first instructions he gives the actors, and the way in which the actors react to these.

One of the first things Barba must do in beginning work on a new performance is to ensure that it presents a new challenge both to himself and the actors. For as Grotowski says; 'Any method which does not itself reach out into the unknown is a bad method.' [2]

The fact that the founding members of Odin Teatret have been working together for thirty years exaggerates their need to explore the unknown in order to be interesting both to themselves and their spectators. It is this search into the unknown that makes even the most experienced practitioners meet the challenge of creating a new performance as a dangerous and experimental journey. And the more experienced the practitioners and the more techniques they have accumulated, the more dangerous the journey must be in order for them to go beyond what they already know.

In creating a new challenge for themselves, it is obviously possible for Barba and the actors to choose different texts, costumes, music etc., than those used

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1 Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point* (London: Methuen,1987), p.3.

2 Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (London: Methuen,1976), p.98.

previously. What is harder, is for the actors and director to change themselves, to rid themselves of elements from old performances and characters. The actors have their daily training as a space in which they can exist and develop independently of their performance work. It is where they can maintain an individual process of evolution, rid themselves of performative clichés and even develop new material for future performances, (the performances *Judith* and *Itsi Bitsi* were developed in this way). The training enables the actors to survive the long rehearsal period without knowing precisely what the performance is about, as it gives them a way of working, an independence and a personal language. The training is a time and place that focuses on the development of the actor, not on the performance.

The director needs to find an equivalent of the training, a way of freeing him/herself of his/her own habits and of discovering new possibilities. In the process of making *Kaosmos* Barba appeared to have two main ways of being able to create material that would surprise himself and eventually also the spectators.

1) Self-obstruction.

In order to oblige himself to find new solutions Barba set himself different and difficult challenges. The result of these difficulties or challenges within the work was that Barba did not have to *think* in terms of working in a new way because he was *obliged* to find solutions to situations he had not before encountered. His technique was not to try and think up new approaches to the same things, but to set himself new challenges that required new solutions. During the rehearsal process Barba therefore often rejected ideas because the Odin had done something similar before. Equally he tried things out purely because they had not tried them before. For the first few months of work the performance was made end on, with the 'audience' at the short end

of a rectangle. When I told Barba I thought it seemed too typically structured for a proscenium arch stage, he said 'Yes, it is, but we've never tried it before, so for us it's interesting'. [3]

The need for new obstacles in order to develop as an artist does not, however, mean that constant change is a hall-mark of quality. Certain fundamental obsessions remain. Again and again in Odin Teatret performances we meet evil, not of the devil, but of human-kind: greed, ignorance, inability to accept purity and a necessity to corrupt innocence. But also heroism, poetry, irony and often a Catholic taste for kitsch. The director, actors, politics and artistic values remain the same. This does not mean that the performances look the same, it means that the same principles guide their creation.

As though to remove the making of performance one step further from the realm of conscious decisions and thoughts, and the consequent risk of self-repetition, Barba does not always set his own challenges. Many of the challenges appear naturally in the material created by the actors. In many ways it is the material that guides the work into new areas and that requires new solutions. In this sense the material becomes a third party in the creative process, something to be listened to, simultaneously crafted and followed. In practice this means long hours of watching the actors' work and being attentive to the details of what they are doing, for it is these that can become keys to the as yet hidden world of their actions. The material has a 'suggest-ability' that the director must be open to. An example of this during the process of *Kaosmos* was when Isabel, one of the young actors, presented her initial material. She lacked 'weight'. Therefore Barba got her to carry one of the other actors

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3 Leo Sykes, 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*', (unpublished text, Denmark, 1992-1993).

while she did her sequence, as this would literally give her weight. But she still lacked weight, so he got her to carry an even heavier actor, then both the actors together. This spontaneous solution to a 'problem' within the work has remained, virtually unchanged, as three scenes in the performance, in which Isabel carries first Tina, then Jan and then the two together.

2) Thinking in paradoxes.

At a workshop for directors in Cardiff in 1990, Barba explained the principle by which the director should 'speak in riddles' and thereby liberate him/herself of his/her own preconceptions and the actors of their clichéd responses to the given instructions:

> The director must create an ambush to cliché - never tell the actor what s/he is to be, give him/her unrelated instructions so s/he doesn't fall into the cliché of a 'love scene'. You have to find the equivalent of the scene. Use paradox, paradox is fundamental. To kill someone with love is a paradox. Thinking in paradoxes is a mental training. It is based in the rule of oppositions.
>
> Always start from the opposite of what the scene is. Ecstasy can look like suffering. [4]

Thinking in paradoxes relates to the principle of oppositions, because everything is approached from an antithetical stand point. Following this approach Barba is able to surprise the actors with his instruction, and equally the actors are able to surprise him with their actions. Both avoid falling into the traps either of cliché or of pre-meditated results.

Barba's instructions are enigmatic, not aimed at achieving the 'correct answer', but rather at allowing the actors to create something personal and unexpected. Therefore the actors and director of the Odin do not begin work on a performance with a consensus of aims. They agree rather to disagree, and this is one of the main principles of their working method. Barba gives the actors instructions, but never

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4 Leo Sykes, 'Director's Workshop Notes', run by The Centre for Performance Research, (unpublished text, Cardiff, 1990)

explains what he wants or why he wants the actors to do what he has asked. Often Barba is not working on what he has told the actors at all. Nor are most of the actors working on what he has told them. Silvia Ricciardelli, a former actor at the Odin, once said that 'the young actors always desperately tried to do what the director said, the old and the clever ones never did'.[5] They all work in their own worlds, in a reciprocal barter of 'deception'. Barba writes:

> At times, in the course of work on a production, an actor's actions begin to come alive, even if the director doesn't undertand why the actor is acting in that particular way. It can happen that the director, who is the first spectator, does not know how to explain rationally, within the framework of the production, the meaning of what the actor is doing.
>
> Directors can admit the difficulty they have in accepting this spark of unknown life, can ask for explanations, can request that the actor become coherent. But they thereby jeopardise the collaborative relationship. [6]

Grotowski also draws attention to the importance of the collaborative relationship, in which the director does not control or logically dominate the work of the actor:

> The producer, while guiding and inspiring the actor, must at the same time allow himself to be guided and inspired by him. It is a question of freedom, partnership, and this does not imply a lack of discipline but a respect for the autonomy of others. [7]

The Director's Instructions

The director's instructions are his/her most important tools. It is through them that s/he inspires, guides and challenges the actors. The director's initial instructions are what the actors use as base from which to create material. Later in the process the

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5 As recorded in my notes from 'Transit Festival for Women Directors' hosted at Odin Teatret in November 1992 by Julia Varley and Leo Sykes. Held in collaboration with The Magdalena Project.

6 Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* (London: Routledge,1991),p.60.

7 *Towards a Poor Theatre*, p.214.

director's instructions will be used differently, in the elaboration of material already created.

A starting point

The first instruction, the starting point, can be anything that the actors can use to improvise from. The director's instructions can, for example, be a stimulus to the imagination of the actor, giving a theme for an improvisation, or, for example, a technical task, asking the actors to find ways of working with a text/prop/costume etc..

The starting point may well only be a spring-board to finding the eventual themes of the finished performance. What is important is not that it specifies these eventual themes, but that it enables the actors to work. Brook writes:

> On the first day of rehearsals, it is virtually impossible to invent something stupid - that is, really stupid - because even the flimsiest idea can be useful if it gets people on their feet and into action. [8]

However, Julia, speaking from the actors' point of view, requires a starting point be not flimsy, but dense:

> To create material that can become alive, the information one starts from must be important and dense, which is to say rich in details. [9]

Whether flimsy or dense, the responsability for the usefulness of an instruction lies also partly with the actor. After all, it is they who must turn it to use.

Not *what* to say, but *how* to say it

Although almost anything can be a starting point for an actor to work from, the way in which the instruction or task is given to the actor is highly important. Therefore the

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8 Peter Brook, *There are no Secrets* (Britain: Methuen,1993), p.63.

9 Julia Varley, '"Subscore": A word that is useful - but wrong', *NTQ* vol.XI, n.42 (May 1995), p.2.

first step in the director's work on a performance is not only to know what to say to the actors but how to say it. Indeed the director only really has verbal actions, words, at his/her disposal. Barba rarely gets up and shows the actors what to do, or how to do something, and when he does, the actors, not through a lack of respect but rather through a sense of self-preservation, do not watch him. At the Cardiff workshop Barba said:

> The way the director speaks to the actors is vital. The information s/he gives must be *condensed*. Each word should contain many associations.
>
> 'Fast' information is that used by newspapers, it is loose. 'Slow' information is like a poem, it is condensed. The director has to know if the production is 'slow' or 'fast'. If it is a piece of political theatre then it is likely to be 'fast'.
>
> Take away all that is redundant or clichéd in your language, take away the tics of every day life. When directing use a 'restored language'. Use a 'slow' form of communication. Take out all 'errs' and 'umms'. Turn the instruction into a poem so that the actor can't use a logical cause and effect procedure, s/he is obliged to find his/her own solution.
>
> Illogical information can be very precise at the same time as giving freedom. The director must have the quality of precision in his/her language. To use precision does not mean to explain everything, it is like a poem, each word is specifically chosen and has a special relationship to the others. [10]

He continued:

> The director must give information at the same time as not giving information. He must give precise information without indicating how the actor should use it. The instruction must be precise and have a hidden side. The difficulty for the director is not to have ideas, but to give these ideas to the actors so that they transform them into something the director never imagined, the unknown. This is the skill of giving information that inspires and liberates.

In other words the instruction must liberate at the same time as challenge and restrict the actor. It must suggest many things, different things to each actor, but it must not just speak of everything and therefore nothing. Brook writes:

> How does one situate oneself between the 'everything is possible' and the 'anything is to be avoided'. Discipline in itself may be either negative or positive. It may

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10 'Director's Workshop Notes'

> close all the doors, deny freedom, or, on the other hand, constitute the indispensable rigour needed to emerge from the morass of 'anything'. [11]

In *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, the university lecturer Phaedrus describes how he encountered and dealt with the problem of giving instructions that were too wide ranging, and how he discovered the paradox that restricting the mind is a way of liberating the imagination.

> He'd been having trouble with students who had nothing to say. At first he thought it was laziness but later it became apparent that it wasn't. They just couldn't think of anything to say.
>
> One of them, a girl with strong-lensed glasses, wanted to write a five-hundred word essay about the United States. He was used to the sinking feeling that comes from statements like this, and suggested without disparagement that she narrow it down to just Bozeman.
>
> When the paper came due she didn't have it and was quite upset. She had tried and tried but she just couldn't think of anything to say (...)
>
> It just stumped him. Now *he* couldn't think of anything to say. A silence occurred, and then a peculiar answer: 'Narrow it down to the *main street of Bozeman*.' It was a stroke of insight.
>
> She nodded dutifully and went out. But just before her next class she came back in *real* distress (...) She still couldn't think of anything to say (...)
>
> He told her angrily, 'Narrow it down to the front of one building on the main street of Bozeman. The Opera house. Start with the upper left-hand brick.' (...)
>
> She came in the next class with a puzzled look and handed him a five-thousand-word essay on the the front of the Opera House on the main street of Bozeman, Montana. [12]

In the making of *Kaosmos* the director's instructions were a catalyst for the actors to react to, not a means Barba used for getting what he wanted. These first instructions generated the performance. Once the process had begun then there was the constant search for new sources of inspiration. These sources could be anything from an image seen on tv, to something discovered during the training, to a song, etc..

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11 *There are no Secrets*, p.62.

12 Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (London: Corgi,1974), p.184-185.

The beginning of work on *Kaosmos* had much in common with the way in which Robert Wilson begins work on his performances:

> Wilson's productions are essentially vast assemblages which he creates out of initially unrelated images, actions and activities, sounds and words. Like a collage, his theatre admits all manner of matter and inspiration - a picture he saw in that morning's newspaper, an image he dreamed the previous night, a post-card brought in by a performer, a scenic element from his last production - virtually anything that seizes his imagination (...) It must be understood at the outset that Wilson's original works do not spring from some motivating idea, organizing theme or even expressive urge. Only in the course of the developmental process do the issues and concerns of each piece come to define themselves. [13]

Actions, not emotions

The only real rule, taboo even, at Odin Teatret, is that the director's instruction must not be based on an emotion. Barba tells the actors what to *do* but not what to *feel*. Barba says that to work directly on emotion leads to cliché. Furthermore, if emotion is the basis for a piece of material it is going to be difficult to repeat precisely again and again, as its stimulus will shrivel and disappear when Barba begins his long process of cutting and montaging different bits of material. Again at the Cardiff workshop Barba said:

> The director can give precise technical information, but never emotional information, as this would be a generalization. Detail is very important, as it is the details that make the spectator react. If a director tells an actor to be afraid, this is vague and abstract nonsense. Tell them rather that 'there is a dog there, now it jumps...' the director gives vocal stimulii for the actor to react to, but s/he must always be very precise. In this way the director can help the actor to react rather than act. The actor does not need to find emotions, the actor needs to find physical reactions. You can tell an actor to share his/her sandwich, but you cannot tell him/her to show love. Give him/her a very concrete stimulus. [14]

Barba does not work directly on emotions and nor do the Odin actors. This is because an action which is based on the actor's emotions, apart from being difficult to fix and

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13 Laurence Shyer, *Robert Wilson and his Collaborators* (New York: Theatre Communications Group,1981), p.XVII.

14 'Director's Workshop Notes'

repeat, puts all its emphasis on the emotional experience of the actor, and leaves what the spectator might feel or experience to chance. Charles Marowitz writes:

> The Method argument for inner truth holds water only if its main contention is true: that is, that the spectator experiences feeling to the same degree that the actor does. But we all know this is not always the case; that there are hundreds of instances of turned-on actors splitting themselves with inner intensity communicating nothing to an audience but effort and tension. It is equally true that an actor who is almost totally turned-off but going through the right motions in the right context can powerfully affect an audience - almost involuntarily. [15]

Torgeir confirms this point of view when he says:

> Feeling is the result of a meeting between yourself and your surroundings. If you begin by feeling something, then all you can reach afterwards is a tense, stressed expression. A feeling cannot be forced out, it is the result of many factors. [16]

If it is possible to talk of the body-voice and emotions as separate, then Barba's collaboration with the actors works from the outside in. He will tell an actor to smile, but not to 'be happy'. Although Barba often gives the actors psychological stimulii, intended to engage their imaginations, he only ever changes or elaborates their manifest, physical selves. It is not that at the Odin they wish to separate the emotions from the rest of the actors' physical and psychological make-up, but as a technique, as a shared language and field of work, they have chosen the body-voice rather than the emotions.

The Actors' First Actions

Improvisation is the basis of the actors' response to the initial instructions offered by the director. Improvisation, in all its different manifestations, is the way the Odin actors create their material for performance. There are no specific rules or set ways for an improvisation either to be instigated by the director, or carried out by the actor.

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15 David Williams, ed. *Peter Brook - A Theatrical Casebook*, (London: Methuen, 1988), p.42.

16 Erik Exe Christoffersen, *The Actor's Way* (London: Routledge,1993), p.44.

As Torgeir stated; 'I believe that within Odin Teatret there are just as many different ways of approaching an improvisation as there are actors in the group.' [17] However, it is possible to define the result of an improvisation by an Odin actor: a fixed sequence of physical/vocal actions, which, as said earlier, at the Odin is called a score.

Improvisation is the moment in which the actor creates and decides. The actors do not, however, take the director's instructions and mentally pre-plan their actions. They *react* to his words rather than *act* on them. When Barba gives an instruction it is for immediate use, not for thinking about until tomorrow. Charles Marowitz, in his work with Brook, notes the difference between the actors' spontaneous reaction and planned action:

> They soon discover they cannot cheat by planning ahead because a prearranged choice is immediately apparent - as is the instinctively appropriate choice which could not have come from anywhere else but the given circumstances. [18]

And in observing the work on *Min Fars Hus*, an earlier Odin performance, Angela Paladini noticed how Barba's instructions were something that the actors should react to in the moment, rather than contemplate:

> *Lungo lavoro attraverso immagini che stimolano la fantasia dell'attore; in effetti le frasi che Barba rivolge non significano molto, e se Jens ed Ulrik avessero la possibilità di fermarsi un attimo a rifletterci sopra si interrogherebbero sul loro significato, e sicurmentente non riuscirebbero più ad andare avanti. Ma non hanno il tempo di fermarsi, nè la possibilità di chiedere chiarimenti (...) Cosí continuano ad improvvisare e i suggerimenti di Barba gli si tramutano in immagini proprie, in reazioni proprie.*
>
> A long session using images to stimulate the imagination of the actors; in reality the phrases Barba is using don't mean much, and if Jens and Ulrik [two of the actors] were able to stop and think about what he was saying they would ask themselves about the meaning of his words, and would be unable to continue. But they don't have time to stop or to ask for explanations (...) and so they continue improvising and they transform Barba's suggestion into personal images, personal reactions. [19]

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17 *The Actor's Way*, p.43.

18 *Peter Brook - A Theatrical Casebook*, p.43.

19 Ferdinando Taviani, ed., *Il Libro dell'Odin* (Milan: Feltrinelli,1975),p.141.

This use of immediate reaction enables the actors to access a pre-logical quality of behaviour and thereby surprise both themselves and the director. It means that the actor creates actions without first establishing their meaning. Tina, the only Odin actor to have been to drama school, explains how she was taught to do a huge amount of pre-planning, virtually writing a biographical book about her character before beginning to work on it physically. But she realized that in the end all the weeks of writing and research were 'invisible' work. She may have written a book, but she still did not yet have a single action she could use on stage. At the Odin she has learnt to approach everything the opposite way round, beginning with the physical manifestation of a character and letting the rest follow. [20] And Stanislavski writes:

> At the beginning of our lesson I told Torstov, the Director of our school and theatre, that I could comprehend with my mind the process of planting and training within myself the elements necessary to create character, but that it was still unclear to me how to achieve the building of that character in physical terms. Because, if you do not use your body, your voice, a manner of speaking, walking, moving, if you do not find a form of characterization which corresponds to the image, you probably cannot convey to others its inner, living spirit. [21]

Not only do the Odin actors not pre-meditate their reactions to the director's instructions, they do not discuss the instructions either. Each actor understands the given instruction independently. But even more significantly, during the whole process of *Kaosmos*, there was no group improvisation. When the actors developed material simultaneously it was always done totally independently of each other. They could share the physical space, but not the world of their actions. No one consciously interacted with another, nor did they create material in relation to each other. So in many ways the instruction, though shared, is not really a unifying factor. There are

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20 Tina explained this in her work demonstration *The Inner Way, The Outer Way* and at ISTA, Bergamo, 1992.

21 Constantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character* (London: Eyre Methuen,1968), p.5.

reasons for this. Individual improvisations allow for a greater depth in terms of details.

Angela Paladini writes:

> *Malou mi diceva che quando si improvvisa individualmente, ricostruendo le immagini del passato che sono in realtà situazioni concrete, si arriva ad un livello di profondità in cui non è piú l'attore che rievoca le immagini intorno a sé, ma queste che iniziano a 'venire' a lui.*
>
> Malou [one of the actors in *Min Fars Hus*] told me that when an actor improvises alone, reconstructing the images of the past, based on real situations, he reaches a level at which it is no longer he who is evoking images around him, but rather the images begin to 'come' to him. [22]

Barba also says that actors are much more interesting when they improvise alone than when they improvise together, because then they listen to their own stimulii; 'When they work together they make corpulent pieces, whereas when they work alone they create details.' [23]

Else Marie, one of the founding actors of the Odin, who did not, however, participate in *Kaosmos*, explains another reason why the Odin has a preference for working with individual improvisations as opposed to group improvisations;

> It (...) had something to do with Eugenio's way of making a montage, where it is often an advantage to have individual improvisations. Group improvisations can be technically difficult to edit. [24]

It may seem paradoxical for a group theatre to pursue a line of individual creativity, but this is what keeps them artistically alive, surprising and heterogeneous. It is also a working principle. As seen in the chapter on montage, the more something is broken down into its composite elements, the more different possibilities there are of re-combining the elements into an entirely different whole. It is easier to combine different improvisations than to separate a group improvisation into different pieces.

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22 *Il Libro dell'Odin*, p.149.

23 'Director's Workshop Notes'.

24 *The Actor's Way*, p.94.

Else-Marie also explains that they found group improvisations almost impossible to fix and repeat with precision, and therefore sometimes used them for sketching ideas, investigating a theme, testing out a scenario, but not so much for creating material that the actor and director would elaborate into a part of the performance. [25]

Following are some extracts from my work diary, which cover the initial phase of the process of *Kaosmos*, showing both Barba's initial instructions to the actors, and the actors' reactions to these instructions.

Kaosmos - A Work Diary

Kaosmos had two starting points. The first was called *The Billion* and the second was called *The Jungle Book*. The second of these starting points evolved into what became the finished performance, which was eventually called *Kaosmos*. The process took place in three separate periods. The work of the first period (*The Billion*) was dropped almost entirely, whereas the work of the latter two periods culminated in the finished performance. The different work periods were:

1) *The Billion* - 3.2.92 - 4.2.92 (2 weeks)

2) *The Jungle Book* - 1.5.92 - 7.10.92 (5 months, including one month summer break)

3) *Kaosmos* - 1.2.93 - 1.4.93 (2 months). This work was a continuation of the work on *The Jungle Book*.

So all in all the process took seven non-consecutive months. The break between the second and third periods was not lost time in which material disappeared or stagnated, rather it allowed the material to settle and mature in the actors' bodies. The reason for

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25 In conversation with the author.

showing the first period of work, *The Billion*, even though the actual scenes and material created at this stage were not kept, is that it was nevertheless a fundamental stage in the process of making *Kaosmos*. It was primarily an introduction of the new and younger members of the group (Isabel, Tina and Hisako) to the Odin way of working on a performance and was therefore of pedagogic importance. It was also a way of introducing the new actors to the older actors. The work on *The Billion* was therefore a period in which the group was created, so that it might later create the performance.

For the sake of continuity the process of *The Billion* will be shown here in full, even though strictly speaking it does not all belong to this chapter. Only the beginning of the process of *The Jungle Book* will be shown here, with the rest continued in the later chapters.

Monday February 3 1992

Day 1 - *The Billion.*

At 8am today we started work on the new performance, T*he Billion*. Of the older actors Torgeir, Roberta, and Julia are present. Then there are Tina, Isabel, Hisako, Lluis (an observer from Spain), myself, and of course Eugenio. The other actors and musicians: Iben, Jan, Kai and Frans are not here due to touring commitments with smaller performances. Because the missing men are the musicians, a musician/composer called Christian has been brought in for the month. Eugenio says he cannot work without music. During the whole process the actors' time is to be split between learning melodies with Christian and working on their physical actions.

We are working in the red room. It is strange to work in here. The room is so vast and so badly lit (normal light bulbs hang high up in the ceiling and have to be changed with the help of a moveable scaffolding) that the actors seem to appear and disappear into the gloom as they move around the room. The actors have placed their instruments along one of the walls. Roberta plays the cello and drum set, Tina bass guitar, Isabel the accordion, Hisako her Japanese flutes and a huge drum, Julia the trombone and Torgeir some little bells.

We begin sitting on chairs in a circle. Eugenio tells us, in Norwegian, (a language I, Hisako, Isabel and Lluis can barely grasp a few words of) about the performance. The performance is called *The Billion,* (they made *The Million* in 1974).

By 8.30am we know it is about the sea, and that as a starting point the actors are to wear their white costumes from the last performance - *Klubauterfolket.* [26] By 8.35am Eugenio has called a halt in the work because the floor is dirty. We all , or rather the younger ones, scrub the floor for the next hour .

At 10am we resume work.

Eugenio tells us that there are some men and women on a beach. Each person is singing a song of twenty words, each of these words contains a secret, that of the singer's relationship with the sea. He says a secret must withhold meaning, because it is almost too secret to say.

All the actors write down their own twenty words, which Eugenio calls their 'mantras', and then create a series of physical actions, a score, based on these words, which he calls their 'yantras'. Eugenio gives indications to the younger actors about

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26 This was a performance made specifically to be shown during the 1991 Holstebro Festive Week.

how to build a score. He tells them to build a ladder of twenty steps (actions). Each step is a new phase. One word = one step= one action.

Eugenio says; 'There is red light, is it evening or morning light?' He tells us there is red sand. These are the only details Eugenio is sure of yet. He tells the actors to build the space in depth and in time. The space is the sea. He asks me to construct the space. I make a beach; swimming costume, towels, bottle of wine, ball, first aid box, any thing I can lay my hands on in the ten minutes I am given. He rejects it all.

Tuesday 4 February 1992

Day 2 - *The Billion.*

Eugenio instructs the actors to continue with the improvisations they were doing yesterday. He speaks to us all;

> Don't be afraid of being banal. You must go through the superficial to arrive at something profound. It is the spectators, not the actors, who must improvise.
>
> Only if the actor is precise can the director work as an improviser, i.e., follow the images the actors' material suggests to him.

And privately to me and Lluis; 'The actor's material is like a stone. The director must sculpt it. From the very beginning I build material in relation to other material.'

Wednesday February 5 1992

Day 3 - *The Billion.*

Eugenio watches the actors without interfering. He is letting the material suggest things to him. He tells me he thinks it could be dangerous for me to observe this process that has no narratives or characters as a starting point. He says a young

director must not work without knowing where they are going, or they will become irretrievably lost. This reminds me of Brecht's disapproval of a young director at the Berliner Ensemble, who, in imitation of Brecht, would turn up to rehearsal without notes or a rehearsal plan.

Torgeir's costume is a long white cloak and a head-scarf. You cannot tell if he is a man or a woman. In a piece of cloth he carries a gnarled wooden mask with straggly, nicotine-stained hair. He looks like a Mother Courage who has been forced to abandon her wagon, and flee with only her most valuable possessions.

I tell Eugenio the idea I get watching Torgeir: Torgeir is the Ghost of Communism. This ghost is no longer welcome in any countries, and so is now a refugee, wandering the Earth, unable to find a home.

Thursday 6 February 1992

Day 4 - *The Billion.*

Since his instruction on the first day, asking for twenty words and twenty corresponding actions, Eugenio has given no more instructions. Today the actors work with Christian (the musician). Each has to invent a melody. At the end of the day Barba asks the actors to bring a poem for tomorrow, that can be fitted to their new melodies.

Eugenio is out of the room for most of the day, doing administrative work as well as writing his new book, *The Paper Canoe*.

Lluis and I watch the actors repeat and repeat their sequence of actions. Roberta looks like a young girl on a beach, watching her mother drown far out in the waves, and then wading out to join her, Tina looks like she is picking over-ripe figs

from old trees, Julia looks like the Old Man in the Sea, who plays at keeping a log book (I am later to realize that she is actually writing down her improvisation so that she will remember it, and the writing is not part of the improvisation at all).

I have written a short text that seems to fit well with Tina's actions. I work with Tina on fitting the text together with the actions. Eugenio comes back into the room and we ask to show him this. Eugenio replies: 'Do not interfere too soon with the actors' material. Let them repeat and repeat, until they unwittingly find the hidden rhythms and microcosmic impulses of their actions. One week is long enough for the actors to make and fix material in, and for it to sediment so that it lives in their body. The actor is then free to work on other layers.'

Eugenio has told the actors to come to him with their fixed scores and song of twenty words when they are ready. This patient waiting is part of the methodology, essential to this kind of process.

A short note about patience

The patient waiting for the actors is not, however, passive. It gives the director time to contemplate the material, before having to actively work on it. It is the kind of active waiting that Grenoville experiences in the novel *Perfume*:

> It was not a dull waiting-till-its-over, not even a yearning, expectant waiting, but an attendant, purposeful, in a certain sense active waiting. Something was happening while you waited. The most essential thing was happening. And even if he was doing nothing it was happening through him nevertheless. He had done his best. He had employed his artistic skill. [27]

Patience was something I was to learn the hard way. Frustrated by my own lack of activity I one day asked Eugenio what I could do to contribute more. He

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27 Patrick Süskind, *Perfume* (London: Penguin,1986), p.225.

replied, 'Three things; be patient, be patient and be patient.' Patience for the director, I was to learn, is not a virtue, it is a necessary working device and is a question of self-discipline. One day Eugenio called me to his office. He said 'sit down'. He opened the book of *Brecht's Ashes*, one of the Odin's earlier performances, and read to me:

> *Il giovane andò dal vecchio Me-Ti e disse: Voglio partecipare alla lotta delle classi: insegnami.*
>
> *Il vecchio Me-Ti ripose: Siediti.*
>
> *Il giovane si sedette e chiese: come devo combattere?*
>
> *Il vecchio rise e disse: Stai seduto bene?*
>
> *Il giovane disse con impazienza: Non sono venuto per imparare a star seduto.*
>
> *Il vecchio disse con pazienza: Lo so che vuoi imparare a combattere. Ma per far questo devi star seduto bene. Perché adesso siamo seduti, ed è da seduti che vogliamo studiare.*
>
> The youngster went to the old man, Me-Ti and said: I want to participate in the class war: teach me.
>
> The old man Me-Ti replied: Sit down.
>
> The youngster sat down and asked: how should I fight?
>
> The old man laughed and said: Are you sitting comfortably?
>
> The youngster replied impatiently: I have not come to learn how to sit down.
>
> The old man said patiently: I know you want to learn to fight. But to do this you must be sitting comfortably. Because now we are sitting, and we are going to study sitting down. [28]

Slowly I came to realize that a process of experimentation and research cannot function if you are impatient for results. A difficult lesson to learn about this way of working is that only in protecting the process from a product orientated mentality, can you ensure the quality of the final result. Gradually I came to understand what Grotowski meant when he wrote:

> In order to get the result - and this is the paradox - you must not look for it. In looking only the brain works; the mind imposes solutions it already knows and you

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28 Eugenio Barba, *Il Brecht dell'Odin* (Milan:Ubulibri,1981), p.13.

> begin juggling known things. That is why we must look without fixing our attention on the result. [29]

Tuesday February 11 1992

Day 5 - *The Billion.*

Today, for the first time, Eugenio actually directed a piece of material. He got all the women to enter in a group, wearing coloured costumes over their white ones. They carry a large piece of blue cloth (the sea), which they spread out centre stage. They use their actions, their scores, to gradually take off the coloured costumes, revealing the white ones underneath. They inter-cut this activity with playing their instruments. They move from the centre where they undress to the edge of the space where their instruments are, and back again. When they have stripped down to their white costumes they all go and play their instruments. Then Torgeir enters, wearing a dress/cloak. He also undresses, turning thereby, from being an old woman into a man. All the coloured clothes are now in a pile on the blue cloth, in the middle of the floor. All the actors re-enter the space, gather up the cloth, containing all the clothes, and exit carrying it on their shoulders like a long corpse. All the colour and chaos of the clothes, actors and music has stopped. The floor remains bare, as at the beginning. The scene has come and gone without visible trace, like a dream.

This scene seems an impossible amount for the actors to do and remember. Tina and Hisako just look harassed as they fight their way through the scene, half way through taking off a piece of clothing they suddenly realize they are meant to be playing music and so they dash off to the side to play, then they dash back on stage to

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29 Richard Schechner, 'Interview with Jerzy Grotowski', *TDR*, T41, Vol.13, n.1, (Fall 1968), p.31.

continue undressing, only to be interrupted again by the music. I feel stressed just watching them. This stress contrasts with the older actors' apparent calm capability.

The older actors and Eugenio share an understanding of the work and a trust in each other. This means that little has to be said, and almost nothing explained. There is no discussion of the work. In the room actions, not words, prevail, outside the room we do not speak of that which happened inside. No outsider is allowed to enter the room, nor is the room allowed to dissipate its contents to the outside world. The work is protected. Brook explains the importance and value of this:

> As the years go by, I see more and more how important it is for actors, who are by nature fearful and over sensitive, to know that they are totally protected by silence, intimacy and secrecy. When you really have this security, then day after day you can experiment, make mistakes, be foolish, certain in the knowledge that no one outside the four walls will ever know, and from that point you begin to find the strength that helps you to open up, both to yourself and to the others.[30]

Thursday 13 February 1992

Day 6 - *The Billion.*

The actors go through the 'undressing' scene from yesterday. Eugenio gives notes to each of the actors afterwards. He says timing, rhythm and impulses are the most important elements and are what he is always looking for.

He tells the actors to find actions that can make their undressing less clumsy - to use their actions; 'For example, if you shrug your shoulders, use this to shake your jacket off, use your steps to leave your shoes behind. Look at the details.'

He tells Tina and Hisako to smile while they are undressing, to not look so grim and determined. He says he knows it is difficult to have the director telling them to smile when they are following a completely different inner logic, perhaps they

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30 *There are no Secrets*, p.100.

imagine they are gazing at the stars, and it seems superficial to smile, but they should try to do what he says without letting it disturb them too much.

Friday 14 February 1992

This was the end of the work on *The Billion*. We were now all to go on tour until May.

Conclusion of work on *The Billion*

For the older actors this initial period of work functioned as a purification from old performances. They had all created highly 'recognizable' material at the beginning of the process, to the extent that I felt I almost knew which scenes from which performances they were recreating. Gradually this tendency lessened. The process enabled the actors to rid themselves of all lingering bits of scores from other performances, ingrained habits and performative clichés.

For the young actors it was a pre-rehearsal, rehearsal training period. *The Billion* was a mini-performance with a beginning, middle and end that showed them how a performance is constructed, how the actors make their material and a how dramaturgy is created. It was a prototypical process that would help them orientate themselves in the later, much longer process of *Kaosmos*.

The material made during work on *The Billion* was not kept but certain elements were. The undressing that took place at the beginning of *The Billion* now happens at the end of *Kaosmos*. Torgeir's 'sex-change' also remains, although it happens the other way round in *Kaosmos*, when he exchanges his trousers for a skirt. The idea 'A ghost that wanders through Europe' became the sub-text, the invisible

theme behind the second stage of work. In this sense the beginning was the ritual that invoked some of the themes for the work that was to follow.

The Jungle Book- The Second Beginning

Monday 4th May 1992

We have all been on different tours for the last two months, and today we met up for the first time All the actors are present now, except Iben. She is not sure that she will take part in this new performance because of the exhausting touring schedule and her involvement in other projects. This time we met in the black room. Eugenio had asked us to set up tables and chairs. From 9am to 4pm, with a quick lunch-break, Eugenio talked.

Eugenio started off by saying that he was not ready to make a new performance, that Odin Teatret no longer wanted to tour so much, that they were currently out of fashion, that they would perhaps be rediscovered, as was Kantor, perhaps not. Eugenio made lots of references to 'the old days' when they used to work with spirituality and intensity. He said that this was no longer possible and that to try to resurrect the past would be lethal, a catastrophy. He talked about the complexities of the group situation and explained his own position. Effectively he made it clear that the task ahead, of integrating and challenging such a large and mixed group: nine people, some musicians, some experienced actors, some inexperienced actors, was not easy and that it would be the responsibility of each individual to find their own challenges and motivations in the work. He said he had neither the desire, nor the ability to do this for them. He thereby simultaneously created a situation of insecurity and personal responsibility. The excitement and expectation that can surround the

beginning of work on a new performance was replaced by a seriousness and an expectation not so much of Eugenio, as of oneself. Only once he had 'set the tone' was he ready to actually launch the new performance.

The Jungle Book

We are going to work on the *Jungle Book*, by Kipling. Eugenio told us to either open the book 'anywhere' or to choose a theme from it. He said it was a jungle of voices and that it contains many interesting elements. Eugenio then said that our 'hidden agenda', our real theme for the next performance was 'The ghosts of Communism'. Ghosts would come back from different performances, they would come without bodies, meet other ghosts and when they have all arrived the three musicians would come in, as a happy element. The last ghost enters, this ghost has been through the whole of Europe: the ghost of Communism. All the old ghosts have a feast. This is the real, but hidden story of the new performance. It is our Ariadne's thread, our secret activity.

Eugenio started talking about ghosts from the past. At Easter he had gone back to southern Italy and seen a long procession round the churches by people dressed á là Klu Klux Klan, playing music that he remembered from his childhood in Gallipoli. He had thought all these traditions had died out, yet there they were, alive and well. He explained that what had particularly fascinated him in these religious celebrations was how the members of the procession would come to a corner, take their hoods off, have a quick cigarette and a chat, put their hoods back on and continue on their pious way.

Eugenio did not elaborate the theme of the 'Ghosts of Communism' any further, almost obscuring it behind the veils of his childhood experiences and memories, personalizing the theme, turning it to use. Maybe this is a way of allowing the theme to penetrate into the subconscious of the actors' minds, without the conscious mind having time to focus on it, or even remember it too clearly, maybe it's not even the theme that's important, but whatever the tale of ghosts-memories evokes in the minds of the actors.

So we have two starting points, two 'oceans' to explore. The public theme of *The Jungle Book*, and the secret theme of 'the ghosts of communism'. Even within the privacy of the room it is only the *Jungle Book* that is referred to, the ghosts theme becoming a hidden undercurrent, occasionally forgotten, occasionally resurfacing.

Thursday 7 May

We are now working in the black room. It is much smaller than the red room, more intimate and a favourite with most of the actors. There is raked audience seating at one end, where Eugenio, Lluis and I sit. This means that from the very beginning the material takes on a purely frontal focus. This is later changed by getting the actors to turn to the sides.

Eugenio tells us all to read *The Jungle Book*. At first I am surprised that he has not asked us to read it before hand, so that we might come with ready prepared ideas and suggestions, then I realize that this is precisely why he has not asked us before hand.

Eugenio tells the actors they are all wolves (wolves are some of the main characters in *The Jungle Book*). He then asks the actors to each make three scenes;

1) Literal birth: Go from the floating world of the womb to the earth of the world.

2) Rite of Youth: The ritual of transition to the moment in which you become you. The id becomes the ego, or the child becomes the adolescent.

3) Old age: This is the holistic wisdom some people have. They are relaxed yet alert, they are wolf-like. But like a truly humble person, they do not try to be wolf-like, and are not even particularly conscious of it.

He tells them that each scene must contain elements that enable them to be woven together with other scenes. He also tells them that each actor is to work on a piece of carpet or cloth that must in some way be able to 'fly', and that this cloth is to be the whole universe of their jungle.

The actors all go off to find their piece of cloth, or 'flying carpet'. Julia creates an irregular green circle with a clump of colours at the top edge, and she stands in the empty part of the circle. There is a red umbilical cord trailing away from the circle. She has only just enough room to stand. Hisako has a lime green cloth which looks like a 1970s table cloth, but maybe she's thinking of the green of the jungle. Jan has another '70s creation with brown speckles. Tina has white circle of slightly pleated cloth, with a hole in the middle. It is a skirt. Kai has a sheep skin rug and a piece of cardboard. Torgeir has a rectangle of lace with red strings at two of the corners. (This is the only cloth to remain in the performance). Isabel and Roberta have similar South American shawls. Frans has a red cloth with a black square on it.

All space is very confined. There are nine actors working in the small space of the black room, and each actor is further confined by their small piece of carpet or cloth, which defines the parameters within which they work. Because the actors have such small spaces to work in they are all making very small and slow actions. They

look very careful and conscious of every move. And, again, as when we started work on *The Billion*, the older actors' clichés are appearing.

So far Eugenio's pattern for starting a performance seems to be to deliver a speech about the themes of the performance, set the actors a theme or a task for improvisation, and then to wait until this material is fixed before he re-enters the work. For now he is just watching them.

At the end of the day's work Eugenio tells the actors that tomorrow they have to wear 'working costumes', not private clothes and not training clothes.

Friday 8 May 1992

All the actors are wearing 'working costumes'. Some of them are elegant, like Roberta in her pink Spanish dress and Torgeir in his suit, others are colourful like Julia in her baggy Indian outfit. (Of all these only Torgeir's costume is to remain in the finished performance).

The actors continue to work on their scores, inventing and fixing them. The boat is now launched.

THE METHODOLOGY OF SEA-SICKNESS

This stage of the process was characterized by chaos, or what Barba calls 'sea-sickness'. Brook writes:

> In the early stages, anything goes: good ideas and bad ideas must pour out in a shapeless, generous and energy-producing mess. This over-elaboration needs to be encouraged into chaos and confusion. Then bit by bit the excrescence is cleared away and the true shapes, the true lines, that were there all the time, can be discovered. [1]

During this stage of the process of *Kaosmos* there co-existed a methodology: the technical work on the pre-expressive level of the dramaturgy, and the sea-sickness: the ability to work without knowing what the performance was about or who the characters were. This was an essential duality. Barba writes:

> At this point it is not yet the meaning of what one is doing that is essential, but rather the precision of the action which prepares the void. [2]

The elements of performance that were worked on at this point were: the actions, the sound-track (music, songs and other sounds, but not the texts) and the set.

Sea-Sickness

What was striking about the way Barba launched *Kaosmos*, was how little information he gave the actors. Rather than creating a whole illusory world for them to operate in, orientating them within a certain context, or giving them characters, he gave them only enough information to be able to create a first improvisation. In many ways he disorientated them, he 'put them at sea'. Ferdinando Taviani writes:

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1 David Williams, ed., *Peter Brook: A Theatrical Casebook*, (London: Methuen, 1988), p.184.

2 Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe* (London: Routledge,1995), p.87.

> Barba has always been a builder of Disorder, both as an artist and as a leader of artists. But what is Disorder? It is not confusion. It is voluntary disorientation, the basis of creative work. [3]

This moment of the process progressed by *virtue* of disorientation, chance and chaos, rather than *in spite* of it. Barba writes:

> That which distinguishes creative thought is actually the fact that it proceeds by leaps, by means of an unexpected disorientation which obliges it to reorganize itself in new ways, abandoning its well-ordered shell. It is the thought-in-life, not rectilinear, not univocal. [4]

In disorientating the actors Barba enables them to create unexpected material. This is the effect he seeks, yet he also acknowledges the difficulties the director can have in leaving his/her own line of thought, in order to follow something else, suggested by the actors' material. At a workshop for directors, Barba said:

> The more suggestive a director's instruction is, the more open it is for the actor, so the actor has more possibility of surprising the director. The director then has the problem of how to work when the actor is leading him somewhere else. The actor receives tasks which are given in a linear evolution, but the director has to deal with all the actor's elements and therefore has to remember so much that as a defense mechanism he risks cutting away many of the details and margins. But many of the best results come from the margins, the off-limits of the work. Never be intimidated by the actor's reactions. [5]

What Barba does not know is more important than what he does know, and it is the actors' task to help him discover the unknown. This refusal to know, to take control, to exclude the gifts chance has to offer appears to be a widely used tactic. The actor Vittorio Mezzogiorno speaks of how disorientated he was when he began working with Brook:

> Initially I was very ill at ease: where was the director? With nobody there to tell me what to do, I was lost. He didn't even say, 'Here we work in such and such a way.' Nothing, so in the early stages I felt very distressed and uncomfortable: then after a certain point my survival instinct forced me to understand that what was being asked of me was to free things from within myself, to give, to be myself. So what started as discomfort became freedom. I understood that the actors were not

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3 Rina Skeel, ed., *The Tradition of ISTA* (Londrina: FILO,1994), p.21.

4 *The Dilated Body* (Rome: Zeami Libri,1985), p.21.

5 Leo Sykes, 'Director's Workshop Notes', run by The Centre for Performance Research (unpublished text, Cardiff, 1990).

supposed to execute certain prescribed things so much as to participate with their whole being in the creation of something. [6]

And of Brecht one can read:

'He is not one of those producers', wrote a colleague, 'who knows everything better than the actors. Vis á vis the play he takes up a position of 'ignorance': he waits to see what happens. One gets the impression that Brecht doesn't know his own play: not a single sentence.' That meant he was open to any suggestion.[7]

The director must, however, know up to what point disorientation creates freedom, and at what point it becomes debilitating and destructive. S/he also has to be aware of the individual actors' different thresholds of sea-sickness. In the process of *Kaosmos*, Iben and Roberta were given their characters many months before the other actors received theirs, because they needed them in order to be able to continue to work. In Iben's case this was because she had entered the process late, and needed a 'way in'. In Roberta's case it was because she was becoming distressed by not having a character. Thus the director has to know how long s/he can leave the work at a purely pre-expressive level, and when to let it move onto the expressive level. Barba writes:

The moment in which it is essential to work on pre-expressivity, is when, during the creative process, our claim to become the authors of meaning, its owners, is emerging. This demand is manifest in two opposite and equivalent ways; knowing too much/being afraid of knowing too little; knowing in advance the results one wants to achieve/being completely disorientated, having lost the thread which leads one through the labyrinth, and therefore feeling the need to impose a definitive direction on the work.

The 'right moment' is that in which it is necessary to disorientate an order that is too evident, or to introduce a thread of order into the disorientation which threatens to pulverize the work. [8]

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6 *Peter Brook: A Theatrical Casebook*, p.376.

7 John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (London: Methuen,1977), p.156.

8 *The Paper Canoe*, p.119.

At this point in the process Barba and the actors refused to become the 'authors of meaning'. They did however work with a methodology offering techniques pertaining to the pre-expressive level of the work. This is what saved the crew from drowning.

The Methodology

Barba describes how a methodology can exist within the disorientation of the sea-sickness:

> We can reach a new shore by sailing without a clearly defined route. We know only the techniques of sailing. We don't know if we will reach the dreamed of continent. Our awareness of our limitations worries us: this time, perhaps, we will not get there. In this discouraging haze, the Ariadne's thread is our daily work, our ability to concentrate on the apparent but concrete simplicity of every action. With the essential precision of the action, which could be our last. [9]

The 'techniques of sailing' that Barba refers to are the techniques that relate to the pre-expressive level of the dramaturgy. It was these techniques that enabled the colleagues of the Odin to work, not concentrating on the meaning of what they were doing, but on the quality of the actions being made.

The first thing Barba does, when the actors present him with their material, is to ascertain whether it functions or not.

'it functions, it doesn't function'

The basis on which Barba decides what aspects of material to elaborate, keep, cut or change is whether it functions or not. The phrases 'it functions' and 'it doesn't function' are more than just words, they are an analytical and objective tool. Objective, because by 'function' he doesn't mean whether he likes it or not, but whether the actor has presence and whether the material is interesting to look at; whether it is alive on the

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9 *The Paper Canoe*, p.171.

pre-expressive level. Barba says; 'It is not important for the director to like or not like something, what is important is that he can see when it doesn't function.' [10] And at the Cardiff workshop he defined what he means by 'function'; 'In the early stages look for what has potential for life, for what functions. This is based on tensions and presence. When something has life you start believing in it.'

At this point in the process there were various reasons for material not functioning. It could not function because it was dead and uninteresting, because the material or idea was too direct in its meaning and was consequently mimetic or because it did not correspond to Barba's directorial taste. This last is not a general principle, but it is the inherently subjective element in any artistic process. It is, however, different from liking or not liking something, as it is based on certain professional criteria. Elizabeth le Compte of The Wooster Group elucidates this point. She says:

> These workers [the actors] bring this material to me, and I sift and siphon through it. It isn't that some material is 'better' than other material. I use it when it links up to something very particular with me, when it extends my vision slightly. Then I can encompass the material. [11]

Establishing what does and does not function is not as straightforward as it may sound. Even this aspect of the process contains its own inevitable paradox. I told Barba of a scene in *Kaosmos* which did not function for me. He replied; 'You're right, it doesn't at the moment. But often those things that initially function so well soon become uninteresting and lack depth, whereas those things which you really have to work on to get them to function, are the most rewarding and interesting in the long term.' As

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10 Odin Week, March 1990.

11 David Savran, *Breaking the Rules - The Wooster Group* (New York: Theatre Communications Group,1988), p.115.

Brecht wrote; 'Fast results are always to be regarded with suspicion. The first solution is usually not a good solution. Not enough thinking goes into it.' [12]

The pre-expressive dramaturgy

Barba looked at the material the actors had created from his first instruction. This enabled him to see what did and did not function. On the basis of this assessment Barba began to work on the material. He did this through a dramaturgical model which he defines as having three main phases: [13]

1) The action that simply is.

2) The action in relation to another action.

3) The action in context.

1) The action that simply is.

Creating an action that 'is', that is scenically alive and interesting to watch, consists in re-structuring the single performer's score, working on her 'microcosmic montage'. The adjustments made at this stage are only a first step in the long and detailed process of elaboration to which the actors' material will be subjected. It is also a step that recurs throughout the process, each time an actor creates a new piece of material. The score can be thought of as a sentence, which consists of actions instead of words. Together the actor and director work on each word of the sentence to condense and enhance it, taking it from the prosaic to the poetic. When Barba worked on the

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12 Carl Weber, 'Brecht as Director' David Richard Jones, ed. *Great Directors at Work* ([Berkeley?]: University of California Press, 1986), p.74.

13 See 'El Caballo de Plata. Seminario per Danzatori e Coreografi', *Teatro e Storia*, Il Mulino, Milan, Anno V, n.2, (ottobre 1990).

individual scores, he did so without adding anything new, basing his adjustments entirely on the material the actor had already created.

When working on the single performer's material at the pre-expressive level, the director can focus on:

a) Changing dead, repetitive or mimetic actions. For example Isabel had an action in which she sat down and rested her hand on her leg. The arm became dead and uninteresting, so Barba told her; 'Make your arm look like it's resting on your leg, but keep it 1mm above the leg, without trembling, so that it becomes strange and interesting.'

b) Creating contrasts by editing two opposing actions together, or making an action go in one direction and then in the opposite direction. For example, Barba told Torgeir; 'Don't make a full circle. Turn in one direction and then turn back on yourself and do the same to the other side - in this way show yourself to the whole audience without making a full circle.'

c) Making the whole body alive by transferring actions from one part to another. For example an action made by the hips can be transferred to the face or from the body to the voice. An example of this was when Jan presented his score, in which his hands and arms were much more active than the rest of his body. In order to get him to engage his whole body (Barba says that all actions must begin from the torso) Barba asked him to transfer the actions of his hands to his feet. This immediately obliged Jan to engage his spine, finding ways of balancing on one foot as he worked with the other off the ground. Barba worked on this new score in detail, looking at each impulse of each action Jan made with his foot.

d) The score can be 'coloured' by qualities of introversion, extroversion, softening, hardening, or it can be reduced. An example of this was when Tina reduced a physical score that travelled far in the space down to micro-impulses in her spine, which she used to keep her body scenically alive while she stood on the spot singing.

e) Changes in rhythm and speed. Barba worked on this with Roberta. He told her that her top half was alive but that her legs were not, so she must slightly shift her weight from one leg to the other throughout her score. He told her she should not make this weight shift staccato or fluid, but work with counter-impulses. He also told her to change the rhythm of the actions she made with her arms. He said it was repetitive and she should introduce pauses in between her actions, so as to create variation in the rhythm.

f) Replacing or removing an object/ text/ melody/ song that had been used in the creation of the score. Julia, like all the others, had made her original score with a small piece of cloth or 'flying carpet'. Barba immediately removed this and gave her a chair to work with. He did not work directly on her score, but asked her to use the chair at a specific point in it. This automatically changed what she was doing, but it was she who found out how to change in order to accommodate this new element.

All the above adjustments were made without taking the meaning of the actions into consideration.

2) The action in relation to another action.

Once the individual scores have been elaborated and fixed, they can then be put in relation to each other. This stage consists in montaging the material of two or more actors. Barba says:

> It is usually the director's work to combine the actions of several performers, whether in succession as though in response to each other, or in simultaneous

presentation in which the meaning of both arises directly from their juxtaposition.[14]

The basis on which a relationship between two or more actors can be created is through action-reaction and impulse-counter-impulse. At the Cardiff workshop Barba said:

> Just moving actors ten centimetres closer together can make a difference. Try to build the relationship as it will be seen by spectators. Weld the actions together in impulses. The actors must be clear in their actions and impulses in order to help each other to react.

The principles of action-reaction and impulse-counter-impulse, are based on abstracted derivatives of natural body language. Abstracted because they are not automatic or spontaneous but conscious and constructed. This artificiality of relationships between the actions of the actors allows for the creation of density. A relationship can be made to be specific or ambiguous, direct or indirect. Once this relationship has been established, all the other levels of text, music, costume etc. can be added to complement or contradict it.

When the actors' separate scores are initially placed together there is no internal relation between the actors. They do not share a narrative or meaning for their relationship. Barba combines the actions of the actors on the purely physical level. As when he restructures the individual score, it is not the actor's inner story that concerns him, but rather how the actions look from the outside. He writes:

> *Questa alternanza, o dialogo, di dinamismi risulta per gli spettatori impregnata di potenzialità espressiva benchè la relazione sia costuita a partire dall'azione che è.*
>
> This alternation, or dialogue of dynamisms is for the spectator full of potential expressivity, even though it is based on the *action that just is*.[15]

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14 Patrice Pavis, 'Dancing with Faust - A Semiotician's Reflections on Barba's Intercultural Mise-en-Scene', *TDR* T123, vol.33, n.3 (Fall 1989), p.42.

15 Eugenio Barba, 'El Caballo de Plata. Seminario per Danzatori e Coreografi', *Teatro e Storia*, Il Mulino, Milan, Anno V, n.2, (ottobre 1990), p.333.

The relationship between the actors will not be believable if the actions and reactions are not precise and controlled. In *Kaosmos* there is a scene in which Jan 'murders' Tina. When making the scene Barba said; 'Jan's strangulation of Tina must not be fluid, there must be points of contraction, sudden actions. The actions must be realistic, I want to see the strangulation, the breaking of her back. *Tina's reactions are very important in making Jan's actions look real here.*'

On the basis of action-reaction it is possible to create a montage of the actions of different performers, in three ways. All of these focus on developing a rhythmic dialogue of impulses between the actors. The three ways are: a) the montaging of two fixed scores, b) combining a fixed score with improvised actions, and c) two actors improvising together.

a) Montaging two fixed scores. An example of how to create a dialogue between two separate scores occurred when Roberta and Julia worked together on *The Billion*. First of all they tried interacting their scores, without either of them making any changes to the number or quality of their actions. Barba then changed the rhythms of their scores and cut bits out. He then gradually built a relationship between them by integrating their scores on the basis of action-reaction and impulse-counter-impulse. This meant that the actors no longer did their scores as independent sequences of actions. Rather they took it in turns to do their actions. Now each action looked like a reaction to the action made by the other. They used their actions like words, interacting them so as to create a dialogue with each other. It should be noted that the work of combining two scores is not just about moulding the *actions*, but also the *impulses* of the actors, so that the montage becomes as much a dance of energies as of limbs.

In addition to this dialogue of action-reaction and impulse-counter-impulse, Julia and Roberta also introduced moments of actual physical contact between them. For example, Julia took Roberta's shoes off her feet, and Roberta stole Julia's hat. They also had eye-contact which, in this context, did not mean that they were constantly looking at each other, but that their gaze at, or away from the other, was a conscious action that formed part of the relationship. The relationship between them ended when they broke eye-contact, they no longer directed their actions in relation to each other and their rhythms no longer coincided.

This kind of interaction creates an explicit stage relationship between the actors. It is also possible to apply the same technique in order to create an implicit relationship. This is done by keeping the interaction purely at the level of impulses, and not making it actually manifest in actions. Barba told the actors:

> When you are not involved in the central action you need to be reacting to that action done by the others. Don't make big pantomime reactions, but ones that are so small that they cannot be seen, but that nevertheless give a sense of energy. [16]

The montaging of two fixed scores was the most common means by which stage relationships were created in *Kaosmos*.

b) Combining a fixed score with improvised actions. Another way of building a stage relationship is to have one actor do her fixed score and ask others to improvise around her. But, in order to be able to do this, the actors need some precise principles with which to improvise.

An example of this in *Kaosmos* occurred when Roberta did her fixed score and Torgeir and Kai were to follow her, each holding a long pole under one of her arms. By introducing Kai and Torgeir into Roberta's score it became the following scene:

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16 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*' (unpublished text, Denmark, 1992-1993).

Roberta lies in her shawl and Kai and Torgeir carry her to the middle of the floor, in the shawl. They put her down and collect a long pole each. Roberta lies curled up on the shawl without moving. Torgeir and Kai put the end of their poles under Roberta's arms. She does her score, just as in her original, even though now she will be 'guided' by these two long poles. From the outside the poles look as though they are leading her, but in reality they are following her movements.

The actor who improvises around another actor, and who therefore does not have an independently created score is, initially at least, totally dependent on the actor they are following. The are dependent on their precision of repetition, and their presence as the stimulus for their own actions. Eventually, however, the actor who was improvising fixes their own actions and is able to develop these.

c) Both improvise together. Whenever two actors were to create a sequence of actions by working together from scratch, Barba always gave them a very concrete, even technical task. For example, Roberta and Julia were to make a sequence in which they were sitting down. They were to find five different positions in which Julia could in some way be holding Roberta while Roberta sung snippets from five different songs. Barba stipulated that the changes in the songs were not to coincide with the changes in position and the whole must happen fluidly. These strict specifications helped them in this task.

3) The action in context.

Once these micro-scenes, with one to three actors, had been created, they could be combined with other micro-scenes in order to create a single, larger scene, a 'macrocosmic montage'. An example of this in *Kaosmos*, occurred when Roberta's scene, in which Torgeir and Kai followed her with long poles, was combined with

Tina's individual score. The way in which this was achieved was through the following steps:

a) Roberta repeated her score, 'guided' by the poles. She was also to introduce vocal actions into her scene, speaking *volapyk* (an invented language often used in the voice training).

b) As Roberta started speaking, Tina was to enter and begin her fixed score. The first time they did this they were not to look for relations between their actions, Barba just wanted to see how their scores worked together.

c) They repeated the scene. This time Tina was to follow Roberta's rhythm. Now the scores should function in relation to each other and not in their own right. It was a question of finding the right impulses and counter-impulses.

d) A doll and knife were introduced as props into Tina's score. Barba remodelled her whole score according to its new context and the technical requirements of working with the props: Tina held the doll in one hand and a knife in the other. At the end of her sequence she fell to the floor and then Torgeir pulled the doll to pieces, revealing it to be a dress, some ribbons, a bone and a money bag. Tina put on the dress and tied the money bag around her waist, put the ribbons in her hair and carried the bone off, using a limited number of actions.

e) During the scene Tina is to 'translate' the text Roberta speaks in *volapyk*. The text is a poem, and is soon dropped.

f) An attempt is made at putting flags onto the long poles carried by Kai and Torgeir, but these are too literal and so are taken off again. Soon the poles too are taken out.

g) Kai carries his accordion instead of the pole, and continues to follow Roberta making the same lifting actions he made with the pole, only now he lifts his accordion and appears to pursue her with its music.

The only element of the scene to remain in the finished performance is the relationship between Roberta and Kai, in which he follows her with his music. This is because the other relationships implied by the scene were found to be no longer appropriate once the work moved on to the expressive level and the characters and narratives were defined.

Another scene in which many scores, (those of all the actors except Frans), were combined simultaneously is called the 'Waterways scene'. This was made much more rapidly than the above scene, and its nature, effect and even mode of construction was chaotic. Many of the contributing elements were created on the spot, though some had been created beforehand. Some of the actors worked in couples, some worked individually. For example, the already mentioned scene, in which Jan 'murders' Tina was incorporated into this larger scene. The only technical information Barba gave the actors in making the scene was:

> Each action is the cue to the next one. The actions need to keep turning in different directions so that it is not always the same part of the audience that gets to see the action. [17]

When making the scene Barba appeared to be trying to elicit actual chaos in the actors, at the same time as incorporating them into a highly precise choreography. He became annoyed and impatient with the actors for not managing to do the scene as he wanted it and he started explaining himself badly. All this contributed to the atmosphere of chaos, and was, therefore, probably intentional. This scene remains

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17 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*'.

virtually unchanged in the finished performance. This is because it never took the expressive level into account. It contains no text or clear moment of narrative. This scene remains one of the moments of true chaos in the performance, in which the spectator cannot focus on any one thing in the overall frenzy of activity.

The progression from working on the 'action that is', to the 'action in relation to another action' to the 'action in context' was as far as the work on the pre-expressive level of the dramaturgy could go. Contexts generated meanings and the work began to move on to the expressive level. Gradually the work became less sea-sick, as Barba now began to steer. The following chapter looks at how Barba did this. Before this, however, it is relevant to look at two other aspects of the performance that were developed before the narratives or characters were established. These are the sound-track and the set.

The Sound-Track

In *Kaosmos*, though all sound is live, it is appropriate to talk in terms of a sound-track. This is because there is continuous sound throughout the performance, much as in film. Though the sound-track is made up of many heterogeneous elements it is an aural weaving that finds its coherence in the interrelation of its different elements, rather than in the distinction between them, as music, speech and sounds overlap. The continuous flow of sound is made up of voices, instruments and noises, some of which are musical, some of which are not. The intention of the sound-track is primarily emotional and sensorial.

The sound-track of the performance varies from the barely perceptible trickle of a whisper or stroked violin string, to the full flood of choral singing and operatic

grandeur. Like the physical score of the performance, the sound-track is greatly detailed. Even the most miniature and unmusical sounds are woven in with great care. Any pauses or silences in the sound-track are part of the overall composition, and serve to highlight the encompassing sound. For example, there is a moment in *Kaosmos* in which Julia wrings out a wet hanky. There is a pause in the rest of the sound-track just at the moment when the drops hit the floor, so that the tiny spatter can be heard.

Apart from all the on-stage sound, the Odin also tend to use off-stage noises.

Off-stage noises

Odin Teatret has experimented with off-stage noises in various productions. As, for example, in *Oxyrhincus* and *Talabot* where noises were heard from behind, above and beneath the audience seating. Barba has taken the principle of the Chekhovian off-stage sound, but instead of using it as an element that unnerves the world of the characters, it is unnerving to the spectators. Invisibly produced sound creates a sense of mystery, the sense of an omnipresent force. It also allows the performance to extend beyond the realm of the performance space. It weakens the spectators' control or comprehension of what is happening. Finally, it creates surprise, which heightens the spectators' concentration. In *Kaosmos* this effect is used to the full with off-stage sounds of a particularly violent nature, like those found in Greek tragedy; '"Noises" in Greek tragedy bring to mind chiefly off-stage noises, and these are as a rule the sounds of violent deeds going on inside the back-ground building.'[18] At the beginning of *Kaosmos* a gasping sound, like that of a drowning man, is suddenly heard. It is a loud,

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18 Oliver Taplin, *Greek Tragedy in Action* (London: Methuen, 1978), p.102.

unexpected and raw sound from behind one of the white screens of the set. Then Torgeir appears dripping wet. Frans, who has spent the whole performance playing his violin from behind the facing screen, appears for the first time, near the end of the performance. His face is covered by a mask of corn. He begins playing a gentle melody on his violin. Frans is an illusory deus-ex-machina. His totally unexpected appearance, with his pastoral looks and idyllic and gentle violin playing, appear to smooth the brow of the disturbed performance. This lull of gentleness is a mere prelude to the most violently explosive scene, which starts with a crash of boots, voices and accordions back-stage, as the other actors, who had gone off-stage, re-enter for their final, violent farewell.

Music

There is so much music and song in *Kaosmos*, that it could almost be called a musical. Music and songs entered the process from the very beginning. As soon as an actor created a piece of physical material Barba would ask the others to suggest music or a song to go with it. Because three of the actors in *Kaosmos* are musicians, and all the actors have a high level of musical competence, Barba hardly needed to intervene in the work on the music and songs. The three musicians would often compose original music, sometimes on the spur of the moment, or over the months of the process. Most notably, Frans composed a piece of choral singing in various sections, which is used for singing one of the main narratives of the performance.

Gathering the music, by asking the actors to contribute whatever came into their heads, resulted in a huge variety of music. There had to be some unifying

principles. The problem was how to retain the richness of this plurality at the same time as stopping it from dissolving into a formless magma.

The unifying criteria gradually evolved during the process. The music chosen was traditional and pan-European. Songs such as 'La Negrita', an obviously South American song, were cut. The only remaining song that does not fit the criteria of being European is a gospel song. This song has an apocalyptic fervour that creates the mood of the end of the performance.

Music is one of the unifying elements of *Kaosmos*. This unifying effect is most obviously achieved through the choral music, composed by Frans, which repeats while evolving throughout the performance. As Eisenstein wrote:

> *L'elemento della ripetizione ha una importantissima funzione nella musica. Nell'opera musicale c'è un certo tema che a intervalli definiti di tempo penetra il materiale nel suo complesso, sottomettendosi a una varia elaborazione (...) questa ripetizione ci aiuta, prima di tutto, a creare la sensazione di unità dell'opera.*
>
> The element of repetition has a very important function in music. In the musical work there is a certain theme that penetrates the entirety of the material at defined intervals, undergoing various elaborations (...) this repetition helps us, above all, to create the sensation of unity in the work. [19]

There are also other aural linking elements in *Kaosmos*. At the very beginning, each actor does a tiny piece that belongs to another point in the performance. It is the memorable aural qualities of these that give the spectator a feeling of familiarity, or *déjà entendu*, when they recur later in the performance. And there is also a moment of 'musical summary', when Roberta sings snippets of all the songs she has sung throughout the performance. The use of repetition exposes the artificiality of the performance structure, but it also lends a feeling of unity.

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19 Sergej Eisenstein, *Lezioni di Regia* (Turin: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi,1964), p.170.

Following are some extracts from my work diary, documenting some of the problems, and some of the solutions, encountered in the work on music during the process of *Kaosmos*.

18 May 1992

Today Roberta taught the other actors a gospel song: 'Can't You See the Clouds Gathering'. It has four voices and there were problems in working out the different harmonies and rhythms. Problems arose mainly because some of the actors work purely by ear, whereas the actor-musicians have a more technical and precise approach as to how to establish the beat. Jan wanted an explanation of the beat, and Roberta just told him to feel it with his body. During the song Jan played his guitar, Isabel and Kai played the accordion and Frans played the violin. This version of the song was very comic. Many months later this was changed. Frans and Jan no longer participate in the song and only Kai still has his accordion. Roberta has a whip, Tina a leather belt and Isabel two iron bars, that are used for beating the rhythm. The song has become very violent.

28 May 1992

We had a music run-through today. What this meant was to do a usual run-through, but with the actors and Eugenio focusing on the music, so that the timing of the sound-track became tighter and the desired holes in it could be distinguished from what were just the mistakes. The actions and the sounds became tightly interwoven, each being the key to the other. A description of a small part of the performance can show how detailed this interaction is and how densely the sound-track is woven: Roberta and

Isabel start singing as Hisako lifts her arm. They stop as Hisako leaves. Kai enters as Hisako sits and starts singing and shaking his chains at the same time. Jan starts playing the guitar as Kai lies down and the women enter singing. Kai exits and all hum, as Jan enters he hums alone, as soon as he is in position the others start singing and stamping, Kai sings his line twice and the stamping group starts walking forwards, as they reach centre stage they stop singing.

The whole performance is structured with this kind of sound-action density.

4 June 1992

Frans (the composer and violin player) talked about the lack of homogeneity in the music. He feels that it is all a patch-work. Eugenio and Frans agreed that the use of leitmotiv and a connecting sound running throughout could help the sound-track to be less fragmentary. Later Frans also explained to me that by a lack of homogeneity he meant that there is a lack of harmony. For instance, two melodies that do not harmonize are played at the same time. This eventually led to some melodies being cut, and to others changing key, so that there was no longer an overlapping of major and minor keys.

12 June 1992

Today was the final run-through before the summer vacation and the lack of unity in the music continues to be a problem.

Eugenio: 'What will give coherence to the music? Should the music continue to be such a patch-work or should there be a more overall principle guiding it? Should we write our own song texts?'

Frans: 'The use of the melodies is too staccato, there needs to be an overlapping of music across the scene changes.'

Eugenio then asked Frans what the underlying sound of the performance could be (for instance in *Talabot*, a previous performance, there had been the constant sound of bubbling water). He said it should be a sound that only really comes through in the silences.

The two underlying sounds that eventually emerged were the hidden strains of the violin, which Frans plays from behind one of the screens, and the resonant strumming of a piano chord which is attached along the length of the shovel that Jan and Isabel take it in turns to carry.

16 September 1992

Today the actors were improvising to music. Jan, Kai and Frans played a wild rhythm while Iben improvised a dance. Her skirt came loose and Roberta went and pinned it up for her. Iben was so in the 'frenzy' of what she was doing that she kept dancing with her head while Roberta was doing this. Afterwards she had to reconstruct and fix the dance and the others helped her by reminding her of what she had done. Once her dance was fixed she and Julia danced together. Julia threw balls of paper, which Iben collected and put in her handbag as she danced. The musicians also fixed their improvised music and Jan wrote lyrics for it. It is called 'The Corn Song'.

17 September 1992

Eugenio worked with Isabel to get her to change her way of singing 'La Muchacha D'orada'. He wanted her to slow down the speed, she said it wasn't possible as it

would destroy the melody. So, as he sometimes does when an actor tells him something is not possible, he showed her what he meant. He sang the song slower to demonstrate that it was possible. Eugenio then told her to create a landscape with her voice, not to be technical. They improvised vocally together. He gave her actions of rocking and cradling to help her lower and soften her voice, as though she were singing to a sleeping child. He asked her to do this at the same time as projecting her voice in the space.

The final element to be looked at in this chapter is the set, which was built about half way through the process, but which had been decided on, after a short period of experimentation, near the beginning of the process.

The Set

The spectators are the set

In reality most Odin performances do not have sets. The audience seating is the most prominent aspect of the set and is part of it. The seating creates minimalist delineations of the performance space, the spectators' knees marking the edge of the actors' activities. The primary concern in creating the playing space is not so much what it looks like but what relationship it will create between the actors and spectators. As the seating for the group performances is only ever around three to four rows deep, this creates an intense intimacy between the actors and the spectators, facilitating a particular form of audience participation. Barba does not believe in the crude dragging on stage of an embarrassed 'victim' or physical interaction between spectators and actors. He says that to literally involve the spectator in the action causes them to

become closed and defensive. To allow them to remain private and safe in their seats, but at the same time engaging them through sheer proximity, within eye-contact of the performers, able to see their sweat, hear their breathing and perhaps even be brushed by their costumes, is to allow them a much deeper form of participation in the performance. This form of participation relates primarily to the kinesthetic function of the performance, whereby it is the quality of the actions and dynamisms that engage the spectator.

In terms of aesthetic requirements, the sets of Odin Teatret hint at certain environments: *Min Fars Hus* and *The Million* both used the concept of an arena, evocative of the circus ring, *Talabot* took on the curved shape of the ship's hull. *Oxyrhincus* was an exception to this minimalist rule, creating a red cloth enclosure, like the womb of hell, which contained both the actors and spectators. This elaborate set was created by a set designer, whereas generally it is Barba and the group who create and build the 'set', with the help of crafts-people and technicians.

The set of *Kaosmos* is a long rectangle. At the two short sides of the rectangle there are high, curved white screens, with white benches for the actors placed in front of them. Along the two long sides of the rectangle are three rows of raked benches for the spectators. The floor is a sandy coloured canvas and is long and narrow. So the set is a very plain, white and yellow frame-work.

When creating the set the main concerns voiced were: 'How can we get the maximum number of spectators into this limited space? How can we rake the benches so that all the spectators can see the floor as well as the two ends? How can we build seating that is light to carry, but is also strong and comfortable? What is the maximum room measurement we can go to before it starts to become impossible to find tour

venues for the performance? What should the floor be made of? What colour should it be?'. [20] In other words, the concerns were primarily practical as the set had to be functional and possible to tour with.

The most expressive aspect of the *Kaosmos* set is where Frans sits, behind one of the white screens. Occasionally the spectators catch a glimpse of his silhouette, enlarged and flickering on the screen. He appears to be sitting under a tree, in a corn field, somewhat in the style of Chinese puppet theatre. But the main set, that encloses the action, is not intended to mean, be or show anything in particular. The set is the surgeon's operating table. It is something that enables the actors to be seen, it is an empty space in which events take place. The two white screens at either end of the space serve as anonymous back-drops that foreground the colourful costumes of the actors. The set is anachronistic. It belongs to a futuristic, stream-lined, efficient world. This is in contrast to the old-fashioned costumes the actors wear. But at the end of the performance the actors strip to reveal modern-day clothing beneath their old-fashioned costumes. So the set could be a warning to the spectators that the characters are not really the olden days folk they appear to be, but belong to the age of contemporary, dehumanized architecture.

The set was not developed during the daily work on performance, but was rather developed through isolated moments of focus on its aesthetic and practical requirements and possibilities. Following are some extracts from my diary that record some of these sessions;

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20 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*'.

18 August 1992

At this point we had no set and lots of different and even opposing ideas were being proposed. Barba to the group; 'The performance space should be shaped as an oval, with the spectators built up on one side (...) How can Torgeir sit amongst the audience [he is dressed in a normal suit so he would not be recognized as an actor] and be able to get out? (...) Where and how shall we build the background (...) We need to be able to project onto the back screen (...) Put the audience in a square, that way we can seat a hundred (...) At the beginning you are all to lay on the floor and be covered by a big blue cloth, which is so light that it can be lifted and suspended above you, creating a ceiling.'

22 September 1992

By now ideas about the set had greatly developed. We knew the space was shaped as a long rectangle and there were two white benches at either short end.

At this point the floor became the major consideration.

Julia: 'We must get the floor, because that will change everything. The floor could be black and the walls white.

Actors: The floor could be a plastic dance floor, or a sail cloth, a dance floor is not strong.

Eugenio: Think visually. A black floor will give a specific sensation. A black cross on the floor would give a strong sensation.

Frans: The cross would become a cross-road.

Eugenio: We could draw on the floor with chalk, creating patterns that would then become destroyed during the performance. The patterns could be walked over. Chalk

would ruin the costumes. You could all could have a small carpet to sit on. We must be able to do a beautiful chalk drawing over the whole floor in one hour, before each performance. It would then be destroyed during the performance. Should the drawing be done before or during the performance?

Torgeir: It is beautiful to destroy something beautiful, something that took time to make, not something that was done in just five minutes.

Julia: We could paint on slides and project images.

Torgeir: We could use paper that has already been painted.

Eugenio: Frans, do you know how to draw?

Frans: Yes.

Eugenio: What's the most obvious thing to draw with?

Frans: Chalk. We could make murals of socialist banners.

Julia: We could make graffiti and use spray cans.

Eugenio: What can we use to try out the idea of painting the floor? Chalk? Dust? Can we try painting the floor tomorrow?

Julia: Jan can't go on a coloured floor with his black costume.

Eugenio: Yes he can, that's what's exciting, to find out what happens. He could become like Harlequin. Tomorrow everyone must come with chalk and a picture they want to draw on the floor.

Kai: I'll buy the chalk for everyone.

Eugenio: Let's use the old floor from *Talabot* to paint on. Wear work clothes tomorrow.'

A couple of days were spent creating beautiful coloured and patterned floors, first with chalk, and then with coloured rice, but none of these ideas of decoration,

projection or colouring remained. Indeed, what was noticeable in the work on the *Kaosmos* set was the repeated attempt and failure to introduce colour. Strangely, though the costumes were richly coloured, the set remained a neutral territory. However, the attempt to introduce colour was an indication of a certain attitude, a desire for vibrancy, comedy and celebration, which has been translated into other aspects of the performance, noticeably the music and costumes, giving the overall performance a hint of the carnevalesque.

All the elements in this chapter were worked on without their meaning being of upmost importance. They were elaborated at the level described here, for their kinesthetic and sensual effects. Some of the elements described remained at this level, others were later elaborated at the expressive level. The following chapter deals with this next stage of the process: the development of the pre-expressive dramaturgy into the expressive dramaturgy. The passage from the sea-sickness of the storm to plain sailing on calmer waters.

The following page shows some of the drawings created by the actors as part of the experiment of drawing on the floor with coloured chalks.

PLAIN SAILING

What harmony there is in this organized chaos! - Stanislavski [1]

Plain sailing occurred after the period of chaos and sea-sickness. There was not a sudden change from one state to the other, but a gradual abating of the storm. This was caused by the movement from the pre-expressive to the expressive level of the dramaturgy. Finally narratives and meanings began, on the one hand to appear out of the actors' material as it became ever more precise and detailed, and on the other, Barba now began to designate meanings as he introduced texts and named characters. As well as adding texts Barba also began cutting everything that did not relate, in some way, to the chosen narratives.

Cutting

Very little material had been cut early in the process. Until the performance was quite defined, almost everything was potentially useful. Only now was it possible to see what material was no longer appropriate. One of Barba's catch-phrases for this aspect of the process is, 'cut your darlings'. By this he means cut out all that which is superfluous to the performance. The director must not be seduced by clever images, but must take out even the most precious elements if they do not fit the whole. In *Kaosmos* a lively scene, in which the actors covered the stage with many pieces of coloured cloth, was taken out. In the end the group could not justify this scene within

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1 Constantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character* (London: Eyre Methuen,1968), p.187.

the performance. Another scene that Barba spent a lot of time trying to get to work, and attempting in many different ways, was one in which money was collected from the audience. Julia was to carry a tray round for the spectators to put coins into. But Barba never found a way of inserting this scene, without it totally disrupting the flow of the rest of the performance and destroying some of the delicate logics that had begun to emerge. It only became integrated, when it completely transformed into its opposite. No longer would Julia use the tray to collect money from the spectators, but instead she would show them its contents. The scene had found a logic that linked it to the performance: Roberta drops glass eyes onto the tray, denoting the moment in which her character, The Mother, cries her eyes out into a lake, and Julia carries the tray round, showing the eyes to the audience.

More noticeable than the cuts, were the additions at this stage of the process. And it was these added elements that came to determine the meanings within the performance.

Meaning

> The work of rehearsals is looking for meaning and then making it meaningful. - Brook [2]

Meaning came from a combination of the meanings attributed by all the participants in the process, not from a consensus of intended messages. Thus a multi-layered semantic world was created. Meaning also began to be generated by the material itself. It is an age-old artistic adage that at some point in the creative process, the created object

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2 David Williams, ed., *Peter Brook - A Theatrical Casebook*, (London: Methuen, 1988), p.8.

comes alive in its own right and begins to define itself. As David Mamet, the screen and stage writer, says:

> If you're honest in making a movie, you'll find that it's often fighting back against you too. It's telling you how to write it. [3]

Barba had previously been open to any material proposed by the actor, not censuring it based on preconceptions. He now retained the same openness when the performance itself began to go in unexpected directions. Barba writes:

> In midst of work on a production, one becomes aware that in reality *another production* is leading us by the hand, without yet knowing where it is leading us (...)
>
> At first, this is a painful experience. Before becoming a feeling of freedom, of an opening to new dimensions, it is a fight between what one has decided *a priori*, what one aspires to, and - on the other hand - the mind-in-life. [4]

Barba, on the one hand, followed the currents that were guiding the work, allowing inherent meanings to become visible and comprehensible. On the other hand, he sailed against these currents, contradicting these meanings and opposing them so that a plurality of possible meanings resulted. Roland Barthes writes; 'This insistence on the plurality of meanings in a text is the logical consequence of absence of any authorial intention in literature.' [5] In the work of Odin Teatret this insistence on the plurality of meanings is the authorial intention itself. What is important is that this plurality does not lead to confusion, but to the active involvement of the spectators, who form their own visions of what is happening.

The actors' material, which had been developed at a level before characters were named and stories defined, could either be developed in accordance with, or

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3 David Mamet, *On Directing Film* (London: Faber and Faber,1991), p.66.

4 Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer* (London: Routledge,1991), p.59.

5 Ann Jefferson and David Robey, eds, *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparitive Introduction* (London: Batsford Academic,1982), p.90.

exploited for, its elements of discord. Roberta's material, for example, as it had been developed at the pre-expressive level, appeared to contradict her expressive level. Roberta plays The Mother who searches for her child, stolen away by Death. Her material includes much running, screaming and foot-stamping, none of which corresponds to any of the conventional hall-marks of maternity. But, although her material was of a different quality and energy to those usually associated with an archetypal mother, an ulterior logic prevailed. This is a mother deprived of her child - the vulnerability and desperation of thwarted maternal love appear in all their bestial and emotional excess as The Mother fights against the ultimate relinquishing of her child to Death. Her stamping, screaming and running thus become the very vehicles of her character's story.

At this point Barba spoke of the importance of creating a balance between telling a story and allowing stories to be told, both shaping and following the material. Barba spoke to Lluis and myself:

> It is fundamental to tell a story. But let the material bring forth the story. The performance is now a boat without a rudder, so the director must know how to play the currents rather than just go right or left when he wants, which means knowing how to decide in the moment, rather than beforehand (...) What determines you as a director is how you tell a story, how you put the material together. You must get to the point of being able to tell a story in the same way that we remember things, which is neither logical or chronological. But one must find a balance between formalism and symbolism [6]

'Formalism'

Barba uses the term 'formalistic' to describe performances that remain at an abstract level, that in their fear of text, meaning and narrative ignore the semantic needs of the spectator. The director is the first spectator, and as such becomes the spectators'

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6 Leo Sykes, 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*' (unpublished text, Denmark, 1992-1993).

champion in matters regarding meaning. S/he creates meanings for them, but those meanings, if not belonging to a common logic, can be so subjective as to seem meaningless to others. It is not enough to merely subvert the dominance of the narratives and meanings of a performance. Something else has to appear as a cohesive factor, creating a unity out of the polarized elements, and acting as the spectators' key to this unity. The unity of the Odin Teatret performances is created primarily through the density and the precision of the actors' actions, which, for the spectator, must create a complex and believable world. There are two keys to the performance. One is made up of the submerged sub-texts and logics, which, though hidden, nevertheless lend strength to the weave of the performance. The other key to understanding is what Barba calls 'concessions to the spectator'. These are the moments of overt narrative in which characters are named and scenes explained. If there are no 'concessions to the spectator' then the performance risks remaining hermetically sealed.

The moment in which these 'concessions' are introduced, certain meanings do become clarified and the actors and spectators both gain a degree of independence from the director. The actors have the security of working with their characters in a more detailed fashion and the spectator is able to feel at once the security of knowing that the performance is not meaningless, even though there is no single, unequivocal meaning.

'Symbolism'

However, should the director over-compensate, and label and define everything, then s/he has fallen into the opposite trap, that of pedantry, which is what Barba calls 'symbolism'.

Consequently, the moment the scene begins to be 'about' something the director has to be careful. A layer of possible meaning can be allowed to emerge without, however, allowing *suggestion to become definition*. As Barba says; 'There are performances of which one understands *nothing*, others of which one understands *everything*. Both are inert.' [7]

The process of *Kaosmos* began with the abstract, potentially 'formalistic' (meaningless), and worked its way towards the meaningful, potentially 'symbolic' (prescriptively meaningful). Barba was to navigate between these two polarities, not to arrive at some point beyond them, but in order to exploit the dynamic of their interplay. In the finished performance the spectator constantly walks the fine line between the security of narrative and the panic of chaos. Barba writes:

> In the creative process, the materials with which we work have both a utilitarian life and a second life. The first, left to itself, leads to clarity without profundity. The second risks leading us into chaos because of its uncontrolled power.
>
> But it is the dialectic between these two lives, between mechanical order and disorder, which leads us towards what the Chinese call *Li*, the asymmetrical and unforseeable order which characterizes organic life. [8]

The director's delicate balancing act between possible meanings and potential chaos is the main dramaturgical line of investigation that Barba embarked upon in *Kaosmos*. The title is based on a combination of the words 'chaos' and 'cosmos', written instead with a 'K' as part of a subliminal reference to the use of Kafka's story in the performance.

How the play between chaos and order is achieved is only occasionally through a sequential leaping from one to the other. More often it is through an overlapping of

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7 Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe* (London: Routledge,1995), p.92.

8 *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, p.60.

the two in a simultaneous explanation and subversion of that explanation. The result achieved is that of ambiguity.

Ambiguity

Barba had begun his process by thinking in paradoxes. The aim of thinking in paradoxes is to create the unexpected and the unspecified, that is, ambiguity.

Ambiguity becomes an important artistic quality when the aim is to make the spectators create their own stories. Exe Christoffersen writes of the Odin's performances;

> The performance can have a built-in ambiguity and the spectator must actively create his or her own meaning and find and choose between many different possibilities. [9]

Ambiguity can be achieved through a sequence of micro-peripeteia, so that every time the spectator is about to be able to predict what will happen next, the scene or action will change direction. This is done to keep the spectators' attention and is based on Barba's working principle of 'never show the spectator where you are going'. A more complex form of ambiguity can be achieved through montaging contrasting elements, and thereby creating something more complicated than the common theatrical notion of perepeteia. Perepeteia creates an unexpected turn of events, but it also creates a hierarchy of meaning. The twist in the tale provides, as it were, the moral tale, the final comment. Ambiguity is more complex for the spectators as they must create their own hierarchies of meaning. The Odin performances' use of montage means that nothing is singular or heterogeneous, but rather everything is an amalgam of foreign details which result in ambiguity.

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9 Erik Exe Christoffersen, *The Actor's Way* (London: Routledge,1993), p.125.

For example, Iben reads out the story of The Mother in Danish and Roberta then translates some of it to Italian. Roberta translates a section in which The Mother's desperation is described. As she translates the line that says The Mother was 'wringing her hands' she executes the action by winding her hands round each other fast, and as she does this she screeches with laughter. This laughter is, on the one hand, desperate and hysterical. On the other hand, it is satirical and a form of insurance against sentimentality or melodrama. In the work of Odin Teatret such a tension of opposites often works to create what Barba calls 'necessary cruelty'. This is a slaying not only of sentimentality, but also of expectation. It gives a heightened effect.

In the same scene as described above Roberta says 'the mother fell to her knees and prayed'. As she says the line she actually falls to her knees, but she falls like a tripped-up child. Roberta's actions do correspond to the text, but the tragic tale and the playful, child-like actions are contradictory in their emotional messages. This creates a grotesque ambiguity.

Ambiguity can also be created without text. There is a thrice-repeated scene in *Kaosmos* in which Isabel murders/makes love to the bodies of Tina and Jan. This scene works with the ambiguity created by proximity:

> The proxemic sign tends towards complexity and ambiguity. For example, Hodge and Kress observe that closeness 'signifies a strong relationship which can either be positive (love, intimacy) or negative (aggression, hostility). Closeness, on its own, thus carries contradiction. It is a strongly ambiguous sign which is only disambiguated if there are other reasons or signs which control interpretation. [10]

The spectator is never clear as to the relationship Isabel has to the bodies she carries, tears at, straddles, strokes and stamps around. Though she appears to slay them with a scythe, she then carries, caresses and intertwines herself with them with all the gentle

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10 Elaine Aston and George Savona, *Theatre as Sign-System* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.155

intimacy of a mother or a lover. The violence of the slaying is also contradicted by the love songs that are sung during these scenes - so they remain unresolved acts of violence or love. Rudolph Arnheim points out the risks run with ambiguity:

> Ambiguity confuses the artistic statement because it leaves the observer on the edge between two or more assertions that do not add up to a whole.[11]

Whereas Eisenstein cites conflict as the unifying factor in a piece of work:

> The classical compositional structures of musical, dramatic, cinematographic or pictorial works are almost always based on the battle between antagonistic elements, bound by the unity of conflict. [12]

Thus conflicting parts risk destroying or diluting each other. But, it is also possible to create a concrete portrayal of facts, that are irreconcilable to a single truth. Hence one of Barba's most loved quotes is from Niels Bohr, the physicist, who said that 'clarity is the opposite of truth'.

Meaning and the spectator

In many ways the moment in which meanings and narratives are introduced into the process, the spectator too is introduced. With the introduction of meaning come all the considerations as to what the spectators will understand and how much it is necessary for them to understand. Technically the work now has to take them into account, and they become the arbiters of what does and does not function.

Meaning, most obviously given by the text, is the spectators' key to the performance. It is what allows them to engage in it on a conscious level. The spectators need to be given *some* meanings in order to be able to generate *their* own meanings. Barba writes:

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11 Rudolph Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p.31.

12 Unable to find source. This quotation was taken from my notes.

> The performer can move in this territory of potentialities for a long time. The tension-attention of the spectator cannot stay there for as long a time. If the intention which makes it possible for the spectator's demands and imagination to become canalized in a precise, chosen and objective direction does not appear, the observer-performer relationship is enfeebled. Attention disassociates and boredom takes over. [13]

Meanings can be given in order to explain things to the spectators, or, like the title of an abstract painting, they can merely suggest things to them. Barba writes:

> Making it possible for the spectators to decipher a story does not mean making her/him able to discover the 'real meaning', but means creating conditions which allow the spectator to ask her/himself questions about the meaning. It has to do with uncovering 'knots' of the story points at which the extremes embrace. [14]

Meaning - personal or universal?

Barba plays on the borderline between universal meaning and individual meaning. He creates a logic-by-degrees. He may include something that has a logic (meaning) only for him, or for himself and one other person, or himself and five others, or himself and all others. He writes:

> For several years, Odin Teatret's performances have contained fragments (sometimes whole sequences) which are directed to certain specific spectators (...) This does not mean these sequences or fragments must appear incongruous to other spectators. Rather, it has to do with creating a woven fabric of actions which is coherent on the pre-expressive level, precise in its dramatic rhythm, and which contain 'knots' of images that can arouse the attention of every spectator. The action or sequences which for the majority of spectators is alive but impenetrable, or simply non-boring, must, for at least <u>one</u> spectator, contain a clear and central value. [15]

The performances of Odin Teatret are, in some ways, the antithesis of 'popular' theatre, not because they do not aim to be valid for everyone who sees them, but because they aim to affect each person differently - they are not elitist, but individualist. The

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13 *The Paper Canoe* (London: Routledge,1995), p.113.

14 Eugenio Barba, 'Four Spectators', *TDR*, vol.34, n.1 T125 (Spring 1990), p.97.

15 'Four Spectators', p.97.

Aristotelian communal and cathartic experience is not the aim, but rather a personal and individual experience for each spectator. Barba:

> Instead of trying to construct a performance as an organism which speaks to all spectators with the same voice, one can think of it being composed of many voices which speak together without each voice necessarily speaking to all spectators. [16]

The primary aims of this approach are: firstly, to make the spectator a participant in the generation of meaning, by giving them an interpretative role. Secondly, it aims to ensure that the performance is valid for every spectator, from the young child to the sophisticated theatre critic. Thus Barba works with what he calls his 'professional alter egos' [17], an artificial and polarized audience that Barba uses as his sounding board. Barba detaches and displaces himself from the actors' material by introducing his professional alter-egos: a child, a blind person, a deaf person, someone who thinks they understand nothing and an intellectual who understands everything. He does this by simply asking himself the question 'What would a six year-old think of this?' or, for example, by listening to the performance without watching it, in order to find out what a blind person might receive. These 'professional alter egos' enable the director to develop an objectivity, establish and fulfil certain criteria and to expand the frame-work of the performance, not only so that it has something for everyone, but so that it satisfies the different aspects of each person.

Beyond the realm of more or less defined meanings, are the moments in the performance that remain totally undefined and somehow undefinable. These moments are what Barba calls 'black holes'. Holes in the cosmos which contain, or are the entrance to, the unknown.

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16 'Four Spectators', p.97.

17 'Four Spectators', p.97.

'Black holes'

Brook writes:

> Emptiness in the theatre allows the imagination to fill the gaps. Paradoxically, the less one gives the imagination, the happier it is, because it is a muscle that enjoys playing games. [18]

Barba uses the term 'black holes' to describe the moments of chaos in the performance, and he describes chaos as the 'logic that the spectators cannot understand.' [19] In other words the chaos, the 'black holes' are in fact just as carefully designed as all the moments in which clearer meanings or narratives can be perceived.

As an aspect of performance, black holes destabilize all the perceived meanings. They are the moment in which the performance delves into uninterpretable chaos, obliging the spectator to relinquish any attempt at following the currents of reason. During the process Barba explained how to construct a black hole: 'Don't sniff the air and say 'Something is burning', but sniff the air, pause, and then go onto something else. Do not state what is happening, but create the possibility of various things.' [20] In other words do not follow up all the leads and tie up all the loose ends, but leave some things unexplained. As Grotowski writes; 'My job is not to make political declarations but to make holes in the wall.' [21]

The black hole must neither be conveniently filled for the spectator, nor must it be so large and formless as to defy attempts to fill it. The spectators' experience of black holes can suspend the whole issue of semantics, leaving the logical part of the mind in momentary paralysis as the senses are called into play by basic, instinctive

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18 Peter Brook, *There are no Secrets* (London: Methuen,1993), p.27.

19 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*'.

20 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*'.

21 Jerzy Grotowski,'Tu es le Fils de Quelqu'un', *TDR*,vol.31,n.3 T115, (Fall 1987), p.31.

reactions to loud sounds, fast and violent action, and the surprise effect of the totally unexpected and unexplained. At one point in *Kaosmos* the whole stage erupts with action and sound in the 'Waterways scene'.[22] This is a prolonged and violent scene, that manages to maintain a high level of (organized) chaos, in which the flurry of limbs creates a strobe light effect, making it impossible to follow any single actor all the way through. The spectator may catch freeze-frames of Jan strangling Tina, or follow Kai as he runs around the space, playing and singing at the top of his voice, while Isabel stamps on the floor shouting in the middle, as Torgeir stands on the benches speaking intimately but leeringly to the spectators, while Julia and Iben are involved in a complicated ritual *a-deux* with the door, and Roberta is wandering the space in a dexterous pollen-bee like dance. Suddenly the door slams shut - silence - all the actors quietly move into the next scene before the spectator has even had time to think.

Such scenes do not contain concessions to the spectator. They unashamedly *are*, without saying *what* they are. They create a break in any logic, and cause the action to proceed in leaps rather than in a linear fashion. These black holes must be delineated and protected. As Barba writes:

> For me the director is rather the person who knows the subatomic reality of theatre and who experiments with ways of breaking the obvious links between actions and their meanings, between actions and reactions, between cause and effect, between actor and spectator. [23]

While protecting these moments of 'organized chaos', Barba also began introducing the elements that would bring clearer meanings to the performance, namely, texts.

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22 This is the kind of scene that is described as an 'individual scene' in the chapter on montage, and its method of construction is described in 'The Methodology of Sea-Sickness' in the section 'An action in context'.

23 'Four Spectators', p.98.

Texts

The texts in *Kaosmos* are used to 'illuminate' the actions. They translate the hitherto abstract actions of the actors into readable actions of characters.

There are two main text-based narratives that run throughout *Kaosmos*: Hans Christian Andersen's *The Story of a Mother* and Kafka's *Before the Law*. The other text to appear periodically is *The Seventh*, a poem by Attila József. There are also various other poems and songs from different countries and eras.

The story of *Before the Law* contains almost no action. It begins with the arrival of The Man From the Country, who then spends the rest of the story waiting to be granted entrance to the Door of the Law, which he is denied by The Doorkeeper. At the end of the story he dies, without gaining access, but in the knowledge that he has wasted his life in a futile wait. The story is an enigma rather than an explanation. Iben plays The Man From the Country, who wants to gain entrance to the Door of the Law, and Jan plays The Doorkeeper who prohibits this.

The challenge the text offers is that of making interesting a situation of waiting, non-events and repeated micro-events. The lack of physical action had to be transcended by turning the individual situation into a metaphor of universal significance, so that the action occurs within the spectator rather than on the stage. Though, dramatically, virtually devoid of action, it is a text that resounds with 'universal truths'. It contains many potential meanings, but none of these is selected by the director, as usual, the spectator is left to write their own message. For example, is the story is a challenge to the whole Christian ethos of 'obey and you will be rewarded'? Is it a call to revolution? Is it about the injustice of the law or the lack of law? Is it a sad story or a funny story? In many ways *Before the Law* is just as

important for its form as for its content. As it is a story of waiting, in which nothing happens, it is perfectly suited as a framing device. The Man From the Country's life-time of waiting provides the framework of the performance.

Andersen's *The Story of a Mother* is about a mother who seeks to regain her child from the realm of Death. Her child has been very sick, and she has been nursing him night and day. An old man knocks at her door, wanting refuge from the cold. The old man cradles the child and The Mother falls asleep. When she awakes, the old man, who was Death, is gone with her child. She embarks on a perilous journey in search of her child. On her way she encounters The Night, for whom she must sing, in exchange for information as to the whereabouts of her child. She then comes to a lake. She cries her eyes out into a lake, so that she might be allowed to cross it. She exchanges her long dark hair for an old woman's white hair, in payment for being told where her child is. Eventually she finds him. He has become a flower. Death explains that were he to live, a potentially miserable life awaits him, and so The Mother prefers to leave him in the hands of Death, rather than bring him back to the world. This is perhaps a tale of thwarted maternal love, or perhaps it is a metaphor of the power struggle between the individual and the powers that be. For the South Americans it was enough to know that The Mother's child had been stolen away by Death, for them to recognize her as the mother of a *desaparecido*. This story has the central character of The Mother, played by Roberta, with the cameo roles of Death played by Jan and The Night and The Old Woman both played by Julia. Julia and Jan have other characters during the rest of the performance.

The Story of a Mother and *Before the Law* compliment each other. Though their stylistic differences initially obscure their points of coincidence, they act as a

mutual thematic foil. Semantically speaking both are concerned with boundaries, with crossing or not crossing the forbidden threshold. The Mother becomes the threshold-hero, as she crosses, when still alive, into the realm of Death. The Man From the Country becomes the threshold-victim, when, at the end of the performance, the door is closed in his face and he is told that his wait has been in vain, the possibility of entry an illusion, and that his life is now over. The obedient servant of an unjust law is an apparently failed figure compared to the revolutionary mother who defies natural and religious law in order to enter the realm of the dead and rescue her child back to the land of the living. But The Mother then outrages both moral and emotional law by relinquishing her quest at its conclusive moment. She prefers to leave her child in the unknown grip of Death rather than return him to the risk of an unhappy life.

In this sense both thresholds, that of the door of the Law, and that of Death, triumph over the desires of those who would cross them. It was pointless to wait outside the forbidden threshold, but it was also pointless to cross it. The thresholds would thereby appear to point to the futility of human existence. This issue is further underlined, and even ridiculed, by the final exit of Torgeir, who plays The Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die. At the end of the performance he is dressed in white angelic garb and born away by Jan, The Doorkeeper, who sings and dances his way off stage. Is this a pantomimic ascension of Christ, with The Doorkeeper an aiding angel, or is this Charon carrying off yet another dead person to that other shore? Somehow all that has been seen of The Doorkeeper throughout the performance, bearing that ominous grave-digger's sceptre, a shovel, and the Grim Reaper's trade-mark, a scythe, make it more probable that it is the latter.

The only other text to run throughout the performance is *The Seventh*. Of it Barba said; 'This poem is important. For me it is a political manifesto. It speaks of different births, once in a burning house, like Sarajevo, once in an ice-cold flood, like in Bangladesh, once in the hospital, once under the Nazis, once in an echoing monastery etc.. Its message is; you will live your life in the same manner in which you are born.' The narrative of the poem traces the curve of life, from birth to death. In this sense it is thematically linked to the other two texts, but as it is sung only in Danish, and is never identified with any particular action or character or scene, it is as of much sonoric as semantic consequence.

In the past work of Odin, the texts were stripped of their original structure and given a new one. Ferdinando Taviani describes how the text for *Ferai*, written by the Norwegian playwright, Peter Seeberg, was taken to pieces and reconstructed in performance:

> *Il testo di partenza è stato evidentemente scompaginato, ma nodi ed immagini continuano ad influire sullo spettacolo. La costruzione portata a termine da Seeberg, macinata dalle improvvisazioni, ricompare - come le vette di una catena sommersa - qua e là nello spettacolo, lasciando indovinare allo spettatore correnti, trasformazioni ed evoluzioni di cui ignora la storia. Ma ogni gesto gli appare davanti con la necessità di ciò che da tutta una storia risulta (...) È il testo come superficie unitaria che è stato infranto. Similmente lo spettatore infrange con lo sguardo la superficie unitaria dello spettacolo, la coerenza della partitura formale, la logica della fabula.*

> The original text has been obviously re-arranged, but certain knots and images continue to influence the performance. Seeberg's finished construction, ground to pieces by the improvisations, re-appears - like the links of a submerged chain - here and there in the performance, allowing the spectator to guess the currents, transformations and evolutions of the story they do not know. But each gesture that takes place before them is the necessary result of a whole story (...) It is the text as superficial unity that has been broken. Similarly, the spectator breaks, with their gaze, the superficial unity of the performance, the coherence of the formal score, the logic of the fable. [24]

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24 Ferdinando Taviani, ed., *Il Libro dell'Odin* (Milan: Feltrinelli,1975), p.104-106.

In *Kaosmos* the texts used are left virtually intact, only being slightly cut in length. *The Story of* a *Mother* is written in a simple, narrative style, typical of the fable and fairy-tale. Kafka's nihilistic and minimalist text *Before the Law* is not charming or picturesque. Barba has edited the text down to its narrative essentials, replacing descriptive detail with real characters. For example, he has cut the line that tells of The Doorkeeper's 'black beard' and 'the fleas on his large over-coat' and substituted them with the tall figure of Jan, dressed in black, peering from beneath the brim of his top hat.

There are certain principles Barba employs in working with text:

1) Don't illustrate the text.

In principle this means that neither the way in which the text is spoken, nor the actions and images that accompany it, should follow the narrative or emotional content of the words themselves. In practice this does not, however, mean that the text and the other scenic elements should be unrelated, or not speak of the same things. It means that they should do more than illustrate the text, they must give it a three dimensionality.

In the use of songs, for example, the words and the melody can give different levels of information. The melody can provide the undercurrent, the hidden emotions and meanings, just as Esslin describes its use in opera; 'the music that accompanies the singing also provides a powerful "subtext" by indicating the mood, the hidden thoughts and emotions of the characters.' [25] At other times it is used as Brecht intended, who

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25 Martin Esslin, *The Field of Drama - How the Signs of Drama Create Meaning On Stage and Screen* (London: Methuen,1992), p.88.

'wanted the tune to provide an ironic commentary on the words rather than "expressing their meaning".' [26]

Some songs in *Kaosmos* give pathos to the events unfolding before the spectators' eyes, as when Isabel carries the apparently dead Tina to the love song 'Yolanda'. At other times the songs satirize the scenes, as when Iben sings 'Du gamle måne', a comic drunkards' song, while Torgeir lies scrabbling on the floor, strangling and bandaging himself. In other words, the text/lyrics and other aspects of performance can be combined to either contradict or correlate with each other. In both cases creating a mutual commentary.

a) Contradiction:

> The opposition between the meanings of the linguistic and the non-verbal signs may function as a meaning-creating system of supreme relevance. [27]

The contradiction of the text causes a dilation of meaning. It creates doubts, questions, tension and surprise in the spectator. It is a way of building up separate layers of information, and of creating semantic depth. It is one of the techniques of ambiguity. A clear level of meaning would appear, were the context of the text - the way in which it is spoken and the actions that accompany it - to correlate with one another. This way of generating meaning risks being both boring and tautological. If the three different elements do not, however, correlate, then separate levels of meaning are allowed to co-exist.

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26 *The Field of Drama*, p.89.

27 Herta Schmid and Alysius van Kesteren, eds, *Linguistic and Literary Studies in Eastern Europe, Vol.10, The Semiotics of Drama and Theatre*, (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1984), p.161.

The combination of different elements and meanings does not explode the performance into shards of irreconcilable difference. The combinations are united by shared inner-logics, by the larger context of the performance or by the tension of contradiction. Contradictory elements comment on each other, whereas many fortuitously combined elements risk remaining unrelated. However, when a conflict is created there is some difference of opinion as to whether it is the text, or the visual aspect of performance that wields the most semantic power. Erika Fischer-Lichte writes:

> When an actor talks about the appearance of the figure whose role he plays or that of someone played by another, referring to the figure, face, hair, and clothing in a manner that contradicts the factual appearance which we see (...) then what counts for the audience is not what it actually sees on stage, but rather what it is supposed to perceive based on what the actors say. [28]

While not denying the suggestive powers of language, this would imply that linguistic and visual signs may not co-exist in contradiction to each other. It prioritizes language, to the exclusion of vision. Martin Esslin asserts the opposite:

> Drama is essentially mimetic *action*. If there is a contradiction between the words and the action, the action prevails (...) Whether it is the assassin who speaks loving words while sinking his dagger in his victim's body, or the dying man who assures his friends that he feels well, the action always overrules the words and, indeed, puts the words into an ironical context, revealing their impotence in the face of events that are beyond words. [29]

These differing points of view are indicative of the complexity of the relationship between not only the text and actions, but all the contributing elements in the performance. All the elements will tend to correlate in a performance that wants to tell the audience a story, or that has a political manifesto, whereas theatre that wants to

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28 Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Semiotics of Theatre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1992), p.20.

29 *The Field of Drama,* p.83.

give the audience an experience, rather than an explanation, can play on the contradiction of these elements.

b) Correlation:

There are moments in *Kaosmos* of simple story-telling, created through a correlation between text and action. An example is in 'the hair-swapping scene'. Iben, who narrates the story of The Mother, says:

> When she reached the other shore she asked, 'Where can I find Death, who went off with my little child?' 'He hasn't come yet', said the old woman who looked after the graves and the huge greenhouse of Death (...) 'What will you give me for telling you what to do next?' 'I have nothing left to give,' answered the mother. 'You can give me you long black hair', said the old woman.
>
> 'I'll gladly let you have it.' replied the mother. And she gave her beautiful black hair and received the old woman's snow white hair in exchange.

During this text Julia, who plays The Old Woman, takes off the long grey wig she has been wearing and places it on Roberta, The Mother's, head. Now Julia has auburn hair and The Mother has the 'old woman's snow white hair in exchange'. This kind of action does illustrate the text, but it allows the text to become more than fleeting words, it concretizes the text into an image that lasts in time as Roberta continues to wear the wig.

2) Combine the text and the action, rather than separating them.

This is a basic Odin principle, intended to counteract the typical theatrical habit of 'talking heads', whereby an actor stands still while speaking. Very often in theatre text and action are separated. The Odin actors work in the opposite manner - speech and action occur simultaneously. This combination has direct semantic consequences, as the words become the key to the otherwise abstract actions. Though most actions do

not directly illustrate the text, they do become its distorted echo. An example of how words can interpret an action is at a point in the Kafka text where Julia tells how The Man From the Country attempts to bribe The Doorkeeper. She combines the text with actions from an improvisation made with a handkerchief:

> Julia: The Man From the Country makes many attempts to be admitted to the law.
>
> *She holds the hanky so it hangs in a square in front of her face, she peers round the edge of it.*
>
> The Man sacrifices all he has, however valuable, to bribe The Doorkeeper.
>
> *She holds the hanky by all four corners, pinching them together and letting the middle hang down, so that its bottom rests in the palm of the other hand. It takes on the rounded shape of a money bag. She profers this forwards and drops the hanky to the floor.*
>
> The Doorkeeper accepts everything.
>
> *She holds out her hands and closes one fist.*
>
> But always with the remark.
>
> *She shuts the other fist.*
>
> I am only taking it to keep you from thinking you have omitted anything.
>
> *She picks up the hanky in a rapid movement and turns her back to the spectators so that the hanky is no longer visible.*

Here Julia plays out the actions of the The Man From the Country and The Doorkeeper. For instance, when she holds the hanky in a bulbous shape and offers it forwards, she becomes The Man From the Country, offering the money bag, and when she snatches the hanky up from the floor she becomes The Doorkeeper taking the bribe. This is an example of how an abstract sequence of actions can be combined with a text so that the spectator believes that they are seeing the actions the text speaks of. The montage creates a connection between unrelated elements in the perception of the spectator.

An example of how the actions can be kinesthetically as well as semantically related to the text is when Iben reads the Kafka text. She says; 'and in came a poor, old man', and Jan enters, hunched over like an old man. The text, in this case, interprets the actor's actions for the spectator. Jan's walk is not obviously that of an old man, but it becomes so when put together with the text. The text and action are not only related on the semantic level, however, but also on the kinesthetic level. Barba told Jan 'You can use Iben's speech rhythm to direct your actions, ie, give them meaning. Use Iben's voice as music, dance to it. It's not really a dance, but let the rhythm of your actions follow her voice'.[30] Thus the relationship between text and action becomes more than semantic, it becomes rhythmic.

Not all the narratives in the performance are denoted by the text. There are non-verbal narratives which are, however, briefly sketched and never clearly defined. For example the relationship between The Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die and The Village Bride is apparent but inconclusive. It is enacted almost entirely at the level of actions - they are seen dancing and kissing for example - but their story is not confirmed by textual narrative, except in a few rather opaque moments, as for example when The Bride points at The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-die saying 'that's him', upon which he gives her a bracelet of silver coins. This means that although this relationship is a constant factor throughout the performance, it never becomes overt. The spectator is told there is a relationship, but what this relationship consists of, what its narrative is, and what it means to the whole, is left up to the spectator to decide.

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30 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*'.

3) The sound of a text is as important as its meaning.

For the most part there is no such thing as 'plain speech' in the work of the Odin as they do not create a dividing line between songs and speech. The way in which texts are spoken is often not based on the apparent meaning of the text. For example, a text may be spoken on the basis of a melody, that remains as a faint musical lilt in the actor's intonation.

The exploration of the aural, rather than the semantic values of a text, aims at finding its unexpected logics rather than at prioritizing sound over meaning. The way in which a text is sung or spoken rarely precludes its comprehensibility. Indeed if a text is to be spoken/sung in such a way as to become inaudible or incomprehensible, then it is questionable if it still qualifies as a text, and has not become pure sound or music. This is not the same as saying that a text cannot have its usual logic interrupted by being spoken in an unusual way. This can release other meanings.

Alternatively the sound of the voice can help convey the meaning of the text. This is particularly relevant to a performance such as *Kaosmos*, in which various languages are used. Iben, who reads out the story of The Mother, translates the text through vocal action. For example, when she says 'I am The Night', Barba asked her to say it in such a way as to make the audience feel the night, even if they did not understand the words. Stanislavski points out the importance of *how* a text is spoken in his book *Building a Character*:

> He spoke in some strange but vibrant tongue. He pronounced unintelligible words with tremendous swing and fire, his voice rising to heights in some sort of tirade, then he dropped it as low as possible, until he was silent and let his eyes fill out what he had left unsaid in words. 'So you see', he concluded, 'I talked in a language incomprehensible to you and yet you listened to me with great attentiveness. [31]

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31 *Building a Character*, p.141-142.

In this case it is how he speaks, not what he says, that engages and communicates to his listeners. The Odin use many techniques for working on how a text is said, rather than what it says. For example, the text can be set to a melody, spoken with the rhythm of the actions instead of according to its own logic or punctuation, or spoken following an image or as an improvisation.

The mode of presentation

In theatre, text is generally presented in dialogue form. In *Kaosmos* this is rarely the case. Dialogue only occurs in brief moments, as for example in the question and answer routine between Iben and Jan:

The Man From the Country (Iben): 'Can I come in now?'

The Doorkeeper (Jan): 'No, not yet.'

This dialogue becomes the leitmotiv of The Man From the Country, who is seeking access to the Door of the Law. The words of this dialogue can finally be removed, and it is enough for Jan to shake his head at Iben for the spectators to laugh at Iben's latest failure to gain entry. However, text is used mostly in the narrative sense, with Iben narrating the story of The Mother and Julia narrating the story of The Man From the Country.

In *Kaosmos* many of the texts are sung in the style of the Broadway musical, in which the singing takes place simultaneously to the actions. But when the text is important to the narrative then *Kaosmos* makes use rather of the Greek tragedy style of choral singing in a tableau. The moments of tableau are effectively the moments in which the action is paused in order to foreground the sound-track, or more specifically, the words. These moments take place most noticeably in the telling of the Kafka story,

where the whole stage becomes static as the words are given full priority and are not detracted from. Any actions that do take place in these moments tend to be illustrative, helping the texts to become concretized in the space.

The languages used

The trans-continental touring programme and international group of actors has caused Odin Teatret to make a wide range of linguistic explorations. For some performances, for instance T*alabot*, the main narratives were spoken in the language of the country they were visiting; French, Italian, Spanish, English, etc.. In other cases one actor will speak in a fixed language and another may translate for them into the appropriate language, as for example, in *The Ashes of Brecht*. This experimentation with language reached a zenith in the production *Oxyrhincus Evangeliet*, in which the text, written by Barba, was spoken in simulated Yiddish and Coptic. The languages were simulated in the sense that more emphasis was put on achieving the sound of these languages than using actual words from them. In this case sounds and tonalities were fundamental to any perception of the meaning of the words.

Kaosmos has taken yet another linguistic route - all the actors speak and sing in their mother tongue: Julia - English, Roberta - Italian, Iben - Danish, Isabel - Spanish, Tina - Danish, Jan - Danish, Kai - Danish, Frans - Danish.

The different texts are spoken in different languages, each being used to denote a different reality. *Before the Law* is spoken in English by Julia and sung chorally in Danish by all the others, *The Story of a Mother* is spoken in Danish by Iben with some translation to Italian by Roberta and minimally to English by Julia, *The Seventh* is sung chorally by all in Danish. Various traditional songs and poems are also sung and

spoken in Spanish, Italian, Danish and Norwegian. Jan and Torgeir converse in Danish. The only scene that is translated according to the appropriate country is the 'presentation scene' at the beginning, in which Jan introduces the characters. It is interesting to note that this is the only scene that Barba considers essential for the spectators to understand, in order to have access to some of the potential meanings of the performance.

This use of many different languages means that often the spectators will not understand what is being said. This has caused the Odin to diminish the reliance of the performance on the spectators' literal understanding of the text. In her article on *Kaosmos*, Janne Risum mentions the possibility of the text being incomprehensible because of the language it is spoken in. She asks:

> So what are the words for? What is the meaning of saying them to strangers? By being spoken at all, the words increase the poetry of the situation by foregrounding it. Their referential function does not depend entirely on their meaning. From a psychophysical perspective, you may even argue that their unintelligibility augments their effect. It is a case of language as physical action, where the meaning of the speech act precedes the meaning of the spoken words.[32]

Not translating the main narratives of the performance avoids the problem of the actors having to learn the text in various languages. The introduction of a new language to the fixed physical and musical scores and rhythms of performance is highly complex. A text and a physical score may have been montaged using an Italian text. If this is then translated to English, it can be difficult to get the actions and words to coincide in the same way.

For the spectator, the fact of not understanding the language means a different approach is required. In choosing not to translate *Kaosmos*, Barba is returning strongly to his whole precept of pre-expressivity. The action must be so present as to

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32 Janne Risum, 'Kaosmos' (unpublished manuscript, Denmark,1993), p.11.

be believable and captivating, even though a specific narrative is not understood. Not to linguistically understand the text is not, however, the same as the text being inaudible or incomprehensible to those who understand the language used. To make sure the texts were comprehensible, Barba invited Danish speakers to rehearsals so that they might specify the moments in which the text became incomprehensible to them. The performance was then adjusted accordingly, perhaps lowering other sounds so that the speaking voice could be heard more clearly, perhaps the actor enunciating more clearly.

Inherent within the narratives introduced by the texts, are characters that play out those narratives. In tandem with the narratives, the naming of the characters is one of the major 'concessions to the spectator' in *Kaosmos*.

Character

The characters fall, more or less, into two categories - those who belong directly to the texts used in the performance; The Mother, The Man From the Country, The Doorkeeper and his Twin Sister, and those who do not; The Village Bride, The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, The Sailor, The Disinherited Son of the Devil and Doña Musica.

This latter group was named very late in the process, therefore the actors had more or less fully constructed their *roles* before knowing who their *characters* were. Julia describes how this is possible, in defining two different approaches to the construction of character:

> In the strategy for building scenic behaviour which the spectators recognize as characters, I realize I follow two major paths - one when I build a role, creating a character which can live also outside the performance for which it was born, because it has a form of being which is independent from the context; the other

when I build material that in the performance gives life to a persona which would not exist if not in that context.

In the first the subscore is based on information which can also be known by the spectators. In the second the subscore is usually determined by a professional need of research which is personal and independent from the theme dealt with in the performance and from the character that the spectator will see. The first is maybe a more traditional approach in which both the actor and the spectator recognize what the character is built on. In the less familiar second approach, the logic that the spectator reads is the result of a cinematographic-like editing that does not respect the laws of cause and effect but those of action and reaction.

> In the first I aim directly at the character's 'interpretation'. In the second I do not think of the role that I will play and I let the interpretation of the character be the result of the montage of my actor's material in the context of the performance. In practice these two trends are often mixed, lending each other the necessary techniques. [33]

Julia thereby creates the categories of character-as-interpretation, and character-as-montage.

Many of the characters in *Kaosmos*, and other Odin Teatret performances, are the result of montage. They are gradually developed through the combining of initially unrelated physical and vocal material. This combined material is then given the unifying packaging of a costume, name and narrative, which the spectator then perceives, not as an amalgamation of different and diverse elements, but rather as a single character. In this sense, theatrical tradition creates possibilities. The audience knows the convention of one actor = one character, and is even sophisticated enough to be able to accept projections outside of the single character. For example, when Julia, for one scene, drops the title of Doña Musica and becomes The Night, the spectators are not confused and their 'suspension of disbelief' does not collapse.

During the work on *Kaosmos* Julia, like most of the actors, was not given a character until about one year into the rehearsal process. Unlike the others, Barba had

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33 Julia Varley, '"Subscore": A word that is useful - but wrong', *NTQ* vol.11, n.42 (May 1995), p.172.

removed all her original material. This meant that her practical possibility of creating a montage of different material was drastically reduced - there was no material to montage. Julia began to develop further material at the pre-expressive level. She writes of her character, Doña Musica; 'Dona Musica of 'Kaosmos' wants to be the shadow of the reading of 'The Tao of Physics' by F. Capra, through forms which do not have a beginning or an end, found with the help of Japanese music.' [34] As can be seen, narrative, history and psychological make-up are not inherent to the creation of character. From the *Tao of Physics* and some Japanese music and with the help of some very high heels, she created a skipping, hopping, stumbling but frivolous walk-run. She then donned a long, luxuriant grey wig and her actions became a kind of childish-geriatric dance. Her character, Doña Musica, is ambiguous - old crone and playful infant. Barba eventually told Julia that Doña Musica 'can constantly hear music and dances to it', hence her name.[35] It is only when Doña Musica loses her wig that she becomes stable, almost anonymous. When she regains it the skipping gait immediately returns. Of Doña Musica, Janne Risum has written:

> She moves with resistance, contrasted by flashes of impulse. She suddenly moves as would a young, childish woman, but only to display in the next second the calculated movements of a very old woman who resists moving at all (...) This female sage, or wise child, is a coincidence of oppositions who negates herself eternally. [36]

Apart from the physical and vocal scores, some of the main elements that created the characters were the costumes and props. These elements did not in themselves necessarily carry meaning, but they were used to elucidate the expressive level of the performance by helping shape the characters.

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34 '"Subscore": A word that is useful - but wrong', p.171.

35 'Work Diary: Kaosmos'.

36 'Kaosmos', p.6.

Costumes

Else-Marie describes how a character can evolve from combing bits of costume:

> I take a piece of fabric and look at it, add a colour, add another element, a headband (...) I develop it step by step. I have no predetermined ideas about the character (...) It is of course essential that one is able to see and recognize a character within these accidentally assembled costumes. [37]

For many months of the *Kaosmos* process, the actors proposed new costumes, so that every day someone would come along in something new. By September there were two overall principles that guided the choice of costumes. The mens' costumes were to be influenced by the children's stories of Hans Christian Andersen and all were to wear traditional European costumes that were mixed, so as not to make them country-specific. Roberta, for example, wears a Greek woollen embroidered jacket, a Hungarian satin skirt, Danish suede shoes, etc., etc.. Most of the costumes were bought in bits and pieces around the world. For the rest, Pia, the costume maker, selected aspects of costumes from various books on traditional folk dress. This overall concept of 'old European' lent a degree of homogeneity to the costumes, so that they could all belong to the same 'world'. And Torgeir, who wears a modern day suit, is able to play an outsider to this world purely by dint of having a costume that does not 'fit' with the rest.

In some cases the names of the characters in *Kaosmos* were even determined by their costumes. Tina, for example, wore a veil of white netting. This white veil was one of the elements that was to turn Tina into The Village Bride. Jan's costume, on the other hand, is the traditional costume of Danish chimney sweeps, as he wanted to

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37 Erik Exe Christoffersen, *The Actor's Way* (London: Routledge,1993), p.91.

dress as a character from another of Hans Christian Andersen's stories. He wears a black uniform with gold buttons, grave and full of authority. The nature of his costume indicated that he should play The Doorkeeper, the most authoritarian role in the performance. And because Isabel's costume also happened to be black, she became his Twin Sister.

In many ways the costume is the character. When at the end of the performance, half the actors shed their old fashioned costumes, revealing their modern day clothing underneath, the spectators recognize that with their costumes they also shed their characters. Thus the beautiful embroidered, pleated and layered vestments of another era, drop to the floor, taking with them the last vestiges of the characters whom they have represented throughout the performance. The costume has been used as the tool of creation and transformation.

Undressing is a leitmotiv of Odin performances, and Barba explains why; 'Undressing happens in all Odin Teatret performances. It is a memory I have from my childhood. At Easter all the pictures of Christ were covered, and then at 12 o'clock on Easter day, the cloth would be ripped off the picture, to reveal Him.' [38]

Undressing can be used for dramatic effect, as in the closing performance of the Holstebro Festive Week 1991, when twenty figures on stilts fell to the ground and divested themselves of their splendid costumes,[39] or as a metaphor, as in *The Castle of Holstebro*, in which a woman in a white dress appears from within the body of a large skeleton, like a butterfly leaving its cocoon. The undressing in *Kaosmos*, in contrast, is threatening in its pragmatism. It is utilitarian, unpoetic and matter-of-fact. The

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38 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*', Barba speaking to students from Århus University after they had seen an open rehearsal.

39 This was a performance directed by Barba with the Odin actors and the actors of Teatro Tascabile di Bergamo.

spectators are not witnessing the birth of an illusion, but the death of all previous illusions. The Mother has become a whip-bearing, mini-skirted, semi-prostitute, The Sailor now sports a heavy-metal t-shirt and his angelic eyes appear to have taken on the fanatic's sheen. The previously quaint characters reveal themselves in all their ugliness and all that has taken place previously becomes like a medieval pageant put on in a strangely nostalgic commemoration of times gone by.

The undressing is both a moment of interest as the actors metamorphose, as well as a moment of deflation, as though they were undressing after the performance. This is in stark contrast to the simultaneously occurring dressing up of Torgeir as a grotesque nativity angel, his chest bound in a white bandage, his face twisted in anguish.

The final elements to be looked at in this chapter are the props. These contributed to both the characters and the narratives of the performance.

Props

At a workshop for dancers Barba explained how the performer should interact with their props:

> *Introdurre un accessorio vuol dire lavorare con la presenza attiva di un compagno (una persona o una cosa) che ci aiuta a reagire. Bisogna saper scoprire le 'vite' nascoste dell'oggetto, le sue potenzialitá, le sue molteplici possibilitá di utilizzazione, non solo quelle che sono evidenti a partire dall'oggetto stesso, ma anche le suggestioni, mutazioni, 'incarnazioni' più sorprendenti. Qual' è la sua colonna vertebrale? Come si muove? Può camminare? ballare? volare? E il suo ritmo? È rapido? È lento? È pesante? Può farsi leggero? Qual è suo temperamento? Quali associazioni suscita, che sia possibile subito negare? Come si può farlo vivere seguendo la logica delle associazioni contrastanti? L'oggetto ha una voce. Come far venir fuori le sue possibilità sonore?*

To introduce an accessory means to work with the active presence of a companion (whether a person or an object) that helps us to react. One must discover the hidden 'lives' of an object, its potential, the many possible ways of using it, not only those that the object makes obvious, but also the most surprising suggestions,

> mutations, 'incarnations'. What is its spine? How does it move? Can it walk? Dance? Fly? What is its rhythm? Is it fast? Slow? Is it heavy? Can it become light? What is its temperament? What associations does it give, which it is possible to immediately negate? How is it possible to make it live following the logic of contrasting associations? The object has a voice. How can one make its sonoric possibilities apparent? [40]

Most of this kind of information is used by the actors when they work with objects in the training, and consequently it finds its way into the performance work. Barba did not give many indications during the process itself as to how to work with props, but there were two main principles that governed their use in *Kaosmos*:

1) Objects must be able to transform and become something else. To illustrate this principle Barba quoted Chekhov's rule that what is a pistol in the first act must become a rifle in the last act. Most of the props in the performance belong to only one of the actors. Each actor worked independently in order to create a variety and a precision in the use of their props.

2) When working with an object, it is not only the object that must be alive, but also the actor's body. For example, when Jan was working with his main prop, a shovel, Barba told him; 'Don't just move the shovel around with your arms while your body remains still, it is you who must move around the shovel.' [41]

There are two main roles played by props in *Kaosmos*. They are used either as narrative objects, or as an emblem of the character who uses them.

Props as narrative objects

These are objects taken directly from the texts used in the performance. The main object in Kafka's *Before the Law* is the Door of the Law. Thus the main prop in

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40 Eugenio Barba, 'El Caballo de Plata. Seminario per Danzatori e Coreografi', *Teatro e Storia*, Il Mulino, Milan, Anno V, n.2, (ottobre 1990), p.347.

41 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*.

Kaosmos is a door and its frame. Thus the subtitle of the performance is 'The Ritual of the Door'. A door is rich in symbolic value, as Peter Brook writes; 'A great ritual, a fundamental myth is a door, a door that is not there to be observed, but to be experienced, and he who can experience the door within himself passes through it most intensely.' [42]

Because the door is so central to the performance and is such a large prop that it cannot easily be put to one side and ignored, there was a need to generate a lot of material and actions that incorporated the door. Barba therefore got all the actors to make a sequence of actions with the door. The door in *Kaosmos* is used in many different ways. It is used in the direct narrative sense, with The Man From the Country knocking on it and asking entry. In other moments the door-frame is transformed into a crucifix, a tomb and a twice into a boat. In yet another the door becomes the centre-piece of celebration, as a polka is played and the group unites in whirling it from one end of the stage to the other. The door is dislocated from its frame, the two separate parts becoming like dismembered limbs, thrown, dragged and chased around the stage, until finally its power is returned, the two pieces are reunited, and the door is closed as it lies flat on the floor, in the same place as it had been at the beginning of the performance. On the one hand, the transformations lend power to the door as it is ever present, but ever changing. On the other hand, its constant subversion through displacement in the space, opening, closing and dismantling, turn it, at times, into an object of self-parody. It becomes inaccessible yet destructible, desirable yet undefined, definitive yet flimsy. Ferdinando Taviani sees the door as incarnating the theme of order and chaos, that is so fundamental in the performance:

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42 Peter Brook, *There are no Secrets* (Britain: Methuen,1993), p.87-88.

> It is the negation of a door: without a house or a wall around it, it admits and separates abstractly, or rather, absolutely. The actors knock on it, they hide behind it, they enter and exit through it (...) There is a rigorous order to those entrances and exits. But there are no spatial confines to give meaning to that order. It is derisory to lock someone out or in when they can slam the door and turn its handle whenever they please, since there is no inside, no outside. Order and Disorder, chaos and cosmos are one and the same thing: Kaosmos. [43]

Screwed to the front of the door are some books, one of these books is hollowed out and contains another book. The Man From the Country reads the story of The Mother from this inner book, which in turn also contains another book. Of these books Julia writes:

> *Dei libri che contengono libri, il corrispettivo nello spettacolo delle storie contenute nel rituale.*
>
> Books which contain books, the equivalent, in the performance of the stories contained in the ritual. [44]

There are various narrative props used in connection with the story of The Mother: a tray with a picture of a lake on it, which drips water and represents the lake The Mother must cross in order to find her child. A pair of glass eyes for when The Mother cries her eyes out into the lake, and a blindfold to represent her subsequent blindness.

Props as emblems of a character:

Other props do not belong to the narratives, but are an inherent part of the characters' make-up, a visual representation of character. These props do not have the same concrete, narrative purpose as the previously mentioned props. For example, Doña Musica has hankies. After all it is she who 'comforts those who laugh until they cry', and, though put to practical use, like wiping a tear from Tina's eye and the sweat from

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43 Ferdinando Taviani, 'A Theatre of Ice and Warmth: On the Thirtieth Anniversary of Odin', *NTQ* vol.XI, n.42, (May 1995), p.162.

44 Julia Varley, 'Vento ad Ovest' (unpublished text, Denmark, 1995), p.23.

Torgeir's brow, her hankies also keep turning into butterflies (by being folded into a butterfly shape), becoming metaphors of the transformative nature of theatre.

The shovel is another prop that becomes emblematic of character. It links The Doorkeeper to his Twin Sister, as they pass the shovel between them throughout the performance, becoming the sceptre of their reign. The shovel has a piano string attached from its handle to its blade, which when plucked gives a strange, reverberating twang that resounds as an ominous sign. It is enough for the spectator to hear its sound to be reminded of the presence and power of The Doorkeeper. The shovel is also allowed certain powers such as blocking out the only light source in one particular scene, then gradually being lowered, allowing the light to return, like a speeded up sun-rise. The Doorkeeper's Twin Sister also uses it to raise The Bride from the dead and at another point the door-frame becomes a boat and the shovel its paddle. The Doorkeeper also has a scythe that reminds us of his other title: Death.

The Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, the eternal outsider of the performance, has a pocket watch, with which he marks out the passing of time. He continually says, 'We still have lots of time', and the performance only ends once he says, 'Time's up'.

During the process both Torgeir and Iben attempted to introduce quite mundane, daily elements in to the fantastical world of the performance. Every day, for a week, Torgeir introduced a new object into the performance. They were all objects from everyday life: foot cream, throat pastels, a miniature bottle of whisky, a packet of crisps and a small bottle of wine. He seemed to be seeking to de-dramatize the scenes with his 'casualness'. Iben also introduced elements from everyday life, for example, her reading-glasses and make-up. Iben kept all her props, but Torgeir kept none of his.

Stalks of corn are not so much the leitmotiv of one character, but a theme that runs throughout the performance. Corn becomes a symbol of purity, nature and pastoral values. The Bride wears a crown of corn and the heads of corn she holds are severed by the scythe. The Disinherited Son of the Devil is seen in silhouette behind one of the screens of the set. He is sitting under a tree in a corn-field, and when at the end he enters the stage, his face is covered by a mask of corn. Throughout the performance corn is cut, chewed, spat out. At the end stalks of corn stand upright from the door, which lies flat on the floor. This is trampled down as a final violent gesture.

Props are typically used to construct the final picture of an Odin Teatret performance. In *Kaosmos* the final stage-picture is the door, lying flat, with the trampled corn protruding, the shovel stuck underneath, with the scythe and Torgeir's burnt bow-tie hanging from it. A desecrated grave.

Following are some extracts from my work diary that document the way in which texts, narratives and characters were introduced into the process of *Kaosmos*. At the beginning of the chapter I speak of the gradual abating of the storm that allowed for the movement from the sea-sickness to plain sailing. These extracts from my diary document the long period in which the performance vacillated between these two states. The diary shows how the extraction/selection of narratives and characters was a difficult and complex process, that was almost as confusing as it was clarifying.

August 7 1992

Today Eugenio gave one of his talks in which he 'explains' the performance. These talks were rare occasions, occurring only about five times throughout the whole

process. They were always a mixture of fable, fact and fiction. They were a laying of certain landmarks that helped the actors and gave them a vision and a frame-work to operate within. This particular talk was much more concerned with the way we were working, than with what we were working on. But the 'stories' and characters were to gradually become much more concrete. These talks usually took the form of a long verbal improvisation, in which Eugenio gave some key information and 'inspired' the work to leap onto another level. Eugenio:

> I want to sail, I want to converse with the winds. We will orientate ourselves by the stars. Ugolino Vadino Vivaldi da Amalfi set off on the same journey as Columbus, and never returned. He let himself be guided by the seas and conversed with the winds. He spoke with the seaweed, with the birds. There comes the moment when one must converse.
>
> Normally when working on a performance you have the information of what it is about, a theme, a text, the names of the characters. This time it is different, it seems the same, we are working with improvisations, etc., as usual, but we don't know what it's about. The central question for the actor is 'who am I, what is my function?'
>
> We have left shore, but I want us to feel the freedom of doing whatever we want to. A reference point must come sooner or later, and then begins the dialogue with the winds. Now the course is in one direction, and we risk missing America. I'm drifting, it seems like I've found solid ground, but it's an iceberg that's drifting. Now is the moment when the iceberg must become a boat. For the sake of the ending it is important to find the right starting points.
>
> I could find known characters for the spectators and actors, but I've done this before so I'm more tempted to let the performance keep the characteristics of the process, without veering towards the objective. What we know today about the term 'chaos' is that it is a coherent whole. We must maintain this quality of chaos, because there lies cosmos. How can we create something that manifests chaos? You must all allow the geysers to appear in the landscape we have constructed. We must be wild if we want to retain the chaos.
>
> The preferred structure for art is that of cosmos. The chaos depends on you, on how many black holes of energy you are able to create. In order to create chaos we have to create infinity. What is infinity? The sea that is evaporated by the sun. Evaporation is not visible, but it is an experience that can be demonstrated. What is invisible? Air, which is necessary. We call it a law. We all know it is present, but each of us relates to it in a different way. It goes beyond the personal, beyond the limits by which we define our positions. What is the law? Invisible air. Kafka's story - *Before the Law* - is infinity, the law within this infinity is chaos. Iben is The Man From the Country, Julia is The Doorkeeper. Law is what defines chaos. If there was no chaos we would not need laws. The laws show us the chaos.

And thus Eugenio introduced the Kafka text and the two characters it contained: The Man From the Country and The Doorkeeper. This text was to become the first major landmark in the performance. It did not however mean that things were more fixed and secure than before. Julia was soon to lose her role as Doorkeeper to Jan, and therefore again find herself without a character. After giving his talk Eugenio spoke to Lluis and I:

> The director's instructions must be enigmatic, suggestive, but practical. So far we have been going without navigation, now it is time to start navigating. Chaos has an internal logic, even if we do not understand it. A performance always has a structure, the cosmos. We must create the chaos. Today I gave directions. We have to let the chaos exist while we construct the cosmos. What does this mean? There has been a pact between the director and the actors. We have worked without knowing where we are going, but trusting each other. Now we must look for details that develop chaos or law. Reference points are fundamental for the director because they help you to orientate yourself and the work.

Eugenio said that now that the Kafka frame had been chosen many doors were closed. He also said that the next step must be to give precise characters and instructions to the actors. Soon afterwards he was also to introduce Hans Christian Andersen's *The Story of a Mother*, and told Roberta she would play The Mother.

17 September 1992

Eugenio:

> A performance is like Magritte's flying castle. A huge airborne rock with a little castle on top. The rocks we have so far are the Kafka and the Hans Christian Andersen texts. We need to find a way of weaving all the rocks together, of finding relations between them. But we can't just impose one overall story. So far only Iben and Roberta really have characters. I need to help the other actors to gradually find elements that form a character. Jan is becoming like a master of ceremonies, like The Doorkeeper.

22 September 1992

Eugenio:

I can't give concrete information to each of you. You are figures from different periods, but I don't know who you are. Each of you needs a personal knot that gives life to the characters in the performance. I'm searching for this knot, like a blind-man with my hands. Maybe it limits you not to know. There has to be a balance between the overall story and the stories of the characters. I'm telling you this now so that you know where I am. Today I am able to say this much. Three days ago I could say nothing. The material is floating, but I think I can find the thread.

24 September 1992

Eugenio:

> The performance is a village festivity. The performance lasts one hour, then there is mythic time which is much longer, then there is the period of between three years and eighteen months, which is how long ago the organized world we lived in fell apart. Communism has fallen and there is the war in ex-Yugoslavia. The skeletons are coming out of the cupboard. We are seeing women and children being shot at.
>
> I can't give you precise tasks. It is difficult to say who you are, because only the performance knows who you are. It is difficult for you because I just push you here and there. For the first time we are making a performance that I do not control, the story is coming slowly, and there is no balance between the personal and the mythical story.

9 February 1993

Finally, two months before the premiere, Eugenio has named all the characters. Today he told all the actors the names of their characters:

> Iben - the daughter of the man from the country, who has now inherited her father's role of waiting. She will be called The Man From the Country.
>
> Julia - Doña Musica, she can always hear music and is therefore always dancing. She comforts those who laugh until they cry.
>
> Tina - The Village Bride and prostitute.
>
> Jan - Death. [Later to become The Doorkeeper].
>
> Isabel - The Twin Sister of Death. [Later to become The Doorkeeper's Twin Sister].
>
> Frans - The Disinherited Son of the Devil.
>
> Torgeir - The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die.

Kai - A Sailor who has been turned into a 'hunch-back' by a siren.

These are not so much names as micro-summaries of the characters' narratives.

Eugenio continued:

> The story is simple, a man comes, and he does not want to die, and the 'Ritual of the Door' gives him this possibility, in the world of theatre. The words of the bible are true 'You want to live, but you must die'. The man who wants to live forever is dead.

Eugenio then went on to paint a picture of the performance that incorporated all the different characters. He began by focusing on Kai's character, a sailor who has been turned into a hunch-back by a siren:

> When I was a sailor [Eugenio spent two years working as a sailor, travelling the world] I saw a siren, and was deeply distressed that I could not play the accordion. Those who see sirens are condemned to becoming hunch-backs, and their hunch-back is frontal, and is full of notes and music. The siren has transformed this hunch-back into an accordion. [Kai wears his accordion throughout the performance].
>
> When the sailor returns to his village everyone admires his accordion, and he sings them songs and plays them melodies from all the different countries of the world that he has visited. But in reality he is playing and singing because of nostalgia for his siren, with whom he would like to be united.
>
> After many years at sea the life in the village seems strange to him. On board one lives in close contact with others, and at the same time one is alone with nature, with the infinity of the sea.
>
> This village is the village in which the 'Ritual of the Door' was born, and everyone has seen it every year, since they were children. This 'Morality' is celebrated every year in this village. A morality play tells people what to think. It is not religious, but profane. The most famous morality play is called 'Everyman'. It is about a rich man who invites all his friends to a large banquet, and an uninvited guest also comes. This guest turns out to be Death. The moral is that you can be the most important or rich person in the world, but the uninvited guest always arrives.
>
> The villagers know that there are some confines that one cannot transgress without tragic consequences. The same is true for the The Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die.
>
> The man waiting before the door represents the generations of human-kind. Why isn't he allowed in? What would the consequence of entry be? To attempt to have contact with the mysteries of life leads to tragedy, like it did for Odysseus. People have no way of understanding death.
>
> This characterizes the woman who searches for her son, and who discovers that human beings cannot know *why* we live and why death exists.

That which is interesting for The Man From the Country is that in the German tradition, The Passion is celebrated every year and the role is passed down from father to son. But The Man From the Country had a daughter instead of a son. [Eugenio thereby justified the male role being played by Iben, a woman.].

Even the man who guards the door is both man, Jan, and woman, Isabel. These two collaborate 'subtlly' . They always work in relation so that they are always shadowing each other, but this must only be understood by the end of the performance.

The way in which they situate themselves in the space makes our awareness of the door concrete. The frontier, the threshold, exists. Frontiers that one cannot transgress do exist, but sometimes one forgets this because there is so much else going on.

Why was The Son of the Devil disinherited? He is disinherited because he does not follow his parent's evil ways, but joins a theatre company in search of truth.

The Man From the Country and The Mother are complementary opposites: yin and yang.

The Village Bride, Tina, has three threads to weave. The thread of the Virgin Mary who protects those in pain or danger. It is she who must construct the home and comfort those who suffer. The thread of a Count's daughter, noble and cold. The thread of the woman who knows *all* the men of the village well, a prostitute. Some of the other women love her and some hate her and some are jealous.

Doña Musica - much can be said about religion, many ugly things, but it has also been a great inspiration to artists, to their imaginations. There are those who thought they could see things others could not see. Doña Musica hears music all the time. Today they would consider her mad, but not in those days. When others look her in the eye, they want to dance. She is unpredictable. In Dubhai I once saw the dervish dancers. All were doing the same movement. Amongst them was a spastic, who was 'disturbing the order'. The others were all moving pompously, just as these villagers have learnt to do, except for Doña Musica. She does not respect the strict etiquette of behaviour, she is the chaos in the cosmos.

We start from the first scene, which is a scene of presentation. There is a great crowd, and then the Ritual of the Door begins.

The Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die is the reason why the 'Ritual of the Door' is being celebrated - he makes it necessary for the existence of the door, of the boundaries, to be remembered. There are those who accept and those who do not accept. In the end the man dies.

The aim of Eugenio's rare talks is to inspire, as much as to inform. So the rather odd 'facts' are not questioned by the actors for their historical veracity, but turned into points of reference that can be practically useful to them in the building of their characters. For example he said; 'when I was a sailor I saw a siren and was

deeply distressed that I could not play the accordion'. It is a fact that Eugenio was a sailor in his youth, and it is also true that he cannot play the accordion. But did he see a siren...? It does not matter. With this story he gave Kai some indications as to how he can work with his accordion in a way that perhaps makes it more than just a simple instrument.

Eugenio later spoke to Lluis and myself about this talk he had given:

> The understanding of the spectator belongs to the last phase of the work. That is what this discussion was about. I was laying the paths in the jungle. Up until now I have only built the jungle, where the spectator cannot penetrate. Giving the names of the characters gives security and acts as a trampoline. I must construct a base so that the performance can speak to us.

Thus the expressive level of the dramaturgy was as fully elucidated as it was going to be. Following this came the final stages of the rehearsal process, which are looked at in the following chapter.

CASTING ANCHOR

The End of the Process

The end of the process consisted mostly of tying up loose ends. This chapter mirrors the succesion of diverse but essential elements that were worked on at this final stage. It looks at the final aspects of the process, and the first encounters of the finished performance with the spectators. As such it does not so much extract principles of practice, as show how Barba finally handed the performance over to the actors.

By the very end of the process Barba was engaged in a new, double process. On the one hand there was the final adjustment of many details and a resolution of all remaining technical difficulties, and on the other, a 'letting go' of the performance. One major aspect of the performance that was left until very near the end of the process, was the lighting.

Lighting

Unlike almost all the other elements of performance, the lighting was not developed from the beginning of the process. Lights were not used for anything other than a general cover until two months before the first open rehearsal, when the attempts to integrate them into the dramaturgy began. Perhaps for this reason the lights were difficult to develop to Barba's satisfaction.

The concept of the lighting had, however, been worked on previously, when the white screens of the set had been built. The white screens were based on an idea Barba had about using photographers' reflectors. The original intention had been to

use the screens as an indirect light source by shooting light onto the white screens, so that they would reflect a diffuse light. The idea was that the reflector-screens would diminish the need for actual light. There was a technical problem, however. The screens became so bright in themselves that not only did they detract from the acting area, but they turned the actors into silhouettes. So a supporting light source was needed in order to give a more general light on stage. Torgeir and Jan, the two actors with technical knowledge, spent some days experimenting with shooting light across the floor, or turning lamps into the faces of the actors or standing lamps behind the screens. None of these methods, however, managed to create a good general light, essential in a performance with nine actors on stage. Barba was also clear that he did not want the light to create a 'centre stage', nor did he want the action to have to be constructed according to the light source. In the end a number of lamps were hung at either screen, with a single projector centre stage, providing general cover. The screens now lighten the stage without really being a light source.

The light design is simple, only occasionally engaging in the action. When it does, it is used to create shadows, and *chiaroscuro* effects. It can also be darkened to create a break in the action that constitutes a scene change, or used as a source of montage, by directing the spectators' attention. Barba, however, keeps this use of light to a minimum, saying that it must not explain 'now there is a scene change' or 'now you must look here', pre-empting the spectators' choice and telling them where the action will take place before it has happened. Nevertheless light is an effective means of creating two or more different focuses, simply by simultaneously lighting different areas of the stage.

To a degree the lighting is also used expressively. A gradual darkening, while all the characters 'sleep', creates the idea of night. In another moment one lamp only is on, and Isabel, uses her shadow, thrown by the light, as a means of menacing other characters. She also casts shadows over other characters by holding a large shovel over the light source. Silhouettes are also thrown by a flickering candle, showing Frans, sitting behind one of the screens.

Other remaining technical difficulties related to the actions of the performance.

Details and difficulties

Throughout the process Barba constantly adjusted scenes in their details, improvising and reacting to what he saw. Sometimes he would do this by introducing a new element, such as a prop or a text, but mostly it was a nitty-gritty, day-in day-out tweaking and tuning of what was already there - the tone of a voice, the direction of a glance, the embroidery on a jacket, the quality of an action. By the end of the process Barba was still working through details, but the criteria of his work had changed. Scenes and actions that had been made to function in their own right, now needed to function in relation to the whole. Equally the performance now needed to function in relation to the spectator, hence the addition of the 'Presentation scene', at the beginning, in which the characters are introduced, in order that the spectators might have some way into the performance.

During the rehearsals of *Kaosmos* many technical difficulties arose and were solved, either by direct intervention from Barba, or by the problem gradually disappearing as the actor(s) involved found solutions. Though most of the material used in an Odin Teatret performance is what could be called 'creative material', taken

from the actors' improvisations, there is also the 'technical material'. This consists of actions whose primary aim is to achieve something required by the performance, for instance opening a door, changing a costume or crossing the floor in order to be in position for the next scene. By the end of the rehearsal period the need to find solutions for residual, or new, technical problems became more urgent.

An example of a technical difficulty that for a long time refused either to solve itself, or to be solved through direct intervention, is the 'hair-swapping scene' in which Julia takes off her long grey wig and Roberta puts it on. The difficulty was that the swap had to happen quickly, smoothly and 'as if by magic'. The solutions proposed throughout the process were always a variation on the same basic idea: Roberta and Julia would stand behind a cloth, held up by Jan, and 'swap hair' as quickly as possible, while the others did small things to detract attention from this task which after all, was only partly concealed behind the cloth. Jan would then drop the cloth and the spectators were to be surprised by the apparition of the transformed Roberta and Julia. But the whole scene was too long and clumsy. Two sessions spent on this scene are recorded below. [1]

23 February 1993

Eugenio:

> Don't cover technical problems - either solve them, or dilate time so that there's time for the technically difficult task to be executed. Roberta and Julia, don't make a big scene about swapping wigs, because it takes too long, and then it needs covering. Dilate time by singing a song or something. It should be a very small element that doesn't cover what is happening, but gives a sensation to the moment.

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1 Leo Sykes, 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*' (unpublished text, Denmark, 1992-1993).

17 March 1993

Today Eugenio asked everyone, both the actors and the observers, who were following this last stage of the work, to propose a solution for Roberta and Julia's 'hair-swapping scene'. All those from the Odin gave technical instructions, and some, like Isabel, gave suggestive images: 'Roberta and Julia are looking into the lake, their hair becomes mixed, they become a reflection of each other'. The observers all gave psychological motivations to the actors, rather than practical suggestions as to how to do things. None of the suggestions really solved the problem so Eugenio asked Roberta and Julia to make a short improvisation each. They took it in turns to do this, each of them taking about half an hour to make the improvisation and then fix it. Eugenio then combined the two improvisations according to the principles of action and reaction. He then placed the two actors in close proximity, and in a moment in which Julia bends over the kneeling Roberta he introduced the 'hair swap'.

In the finished performance the light dims during this scene and Julia bends over Roberta. When Julia straightens up again the grey hair is on Roberta's head, and Julia's hair is auburn. Technically all that happens is that Roberta pulls the wig from Julia's head and places it on her own in a single movement. Because of the dim light, the proximity of the actors and the dexterity of their actions the spectators are not quite able to see how this happens, though it takes place before their very eyes.

Julia, in an article about the process of making *Kaosmos*, describes the technical difficulties behind the hair-swap:

> *Lavoriamo per ore e ore sullo scambio della parrucca fra Roberta e Julia. Cercando di ripartire con il piede giusto il regista da alle attrici un tema di improvvisazione - la morte del cigno - perchè possano produrre dei materiali e non pensare solo tecnicamente. Ma il problema tecnico di non far vedere come avviene lo scambio della parrucca rimane. Dedichiamo ore di lavoro alla posizione delle dita, al secondo giusto per passare da un dito all altro. Dopo lo scambio Roberta rimance con la parrucca e il regista vorrebbe che Julia*

rimanesse poi coi suoi capelli naturali (...) Abbassando le luci si cerca di nascondere le difficoltà impossibili da superare.

We work for hours and hours on the exchange of wigs between Roberta and Julia. Trying, this time, to start off on the right footing the director gives the actresses a theme for an improvisation - the death of the swan. He does this in order to help them produce material and to not think only technically. But the technical problem of not showing how the wig is exchanged remains. We spend hours working on the position of our fingers, just in order to move on from one finger to another. After the exchange it is Roberta who has the wig, and the director wants Julia to have her own hair (...) Dimming the lights we seek to hide technical difficulties that are impossible to overcome. [2]

The spectator, on seeing the apparent simplicity of this theatrical metamorphosis, is not aware of the technical work behind that simplicity.

'Letting go'

At the same time as all these final and technical adjustments were taking place, the director also had to let go of the performance. The performance had at last to become an independent entity, something that functioned in its own right.

'Letting go' means that the director stops intervening in the performance. During the many months of the process Barba invariably interrupted every run-through in order to work on a specific scene. By the end of the process, however, Barba was no longer intervening in the moment, but rather giving notes to the actors afterwards. This was a way of allowing the performance to find its rhythms and to become a flow. It was also a way of reducing his presence and allowing that of the actors to become ever clearer. There came the transition point at which Barba had done all that he could dramaturgically, and now it was up to the actors to bring the performance alive.

It was only through this kind of 'letting-go', or 'letting-be', of the performance that its true nature came to light. Through repetition certain parts began to function,

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2 Julia Varley, 'Vento ad Ovest' (unpublished text, Denmark, 1995), p.30.

whereas those that still did not function became apparent problem areas for which solutions had to be found. Repetition is considered a very important part of the process at Odin Teatret. Through repetition the actors gain confidence and a body-memory of the performance that allows their technically executed actions to become alive, and, ironically, apparently more spontaneous, because they are no longer having to think about them, but they happen through body-memory. After having been through all the different changes introduced by Barba the actors were finally left alone to recover the lost intimacy with their own material.

The only aspects of performance that Barba did not 'let go' of until after the premiere, are perhaps its most important aspects - its beginning and end. The beginning and end were the last parts of the performance to be made. This was partly because it was not possible to finalize them until the middle had been made and partly because their sheer importance made them all the harder to finalize. The beginning and end of a performance determine the way in which the spectator perceives the whole. Perhaps Barba needed to see them with an audience before being able to decide their final form.

The beginning

> The beginning of a performance is so important. One must begin directly and simply. - Brook. [3]

Apart from his work as an actor, Torgeir also directs films, and he says that the first five minutes are what decide the film. The director has just that short moment in which to establish what the film is about, what style it is going to be in, and how the

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3 Jean Kalman interviews Peter Brook, 'Any Event Stems From Combustion: Actors, Audiences and Theatrical Energy', *NTQ*, vol.VIII, n.30, (May 1992), p.108.

spectator is to perceive it. The beginning is where s/he stakes his/her stylistic and semantic claims. The beginning of *Kaosmos* has a highly informative role, introducing the characters, narratives and style of the performance. This is all the more important as the spectators are unlikely to read the long programme of *Kaosmos* before entering the performance, nor are they able to glean much sense of what the performance is about from the title. There is a three tier beginning to the performance:

1) Julia's long-haired, ethereal Doña Musica enters. She waves and gesticulates to the sedentary Doorkeeper, Jan. A loud gasp is heard from behind one of the screens and Torgeir enters dripping wet. He says: 'I'm looking for the land where no one dies'. The other characters enter one by one.

2) Suddenly the stage picture freezes as the first piece of Kafka text is spoken. It says that a man from the country has come to seek access to the Door of the Law.

3) After this comes 'the presentation scene' in which Jan introduces all the characters.

Thus the first narrative to enter the performance is that of The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, the second is the Kafka text and the third consists of all the individual narratives. No apparent connection between these narratives is given and therefore, right from the start, there is the sense that many different realities are being woven into the single time-space continuum of the performance. The information given is on the one hand a key for the spectators, that enables them to understand and interpret what they see. On the other hand it is a way of getting them hooked - they are given some information, but most of it is enigmatic and does not provide real answers to the question 'who are these people and what are they doing?'. After all this information has been given the performance begins for real - the characters and narratives diverge, not to be unified again until the end of the performance.

The end

> The end is a knot which draws together all the threads that have been woven and interwoven during the work, sealing the 'sensuous and logical' text. The true end is the one which finds its own beginning, a rare experience where opposites embrace, and polarities seem to co-exist in the same situation, in one body, in one action. - Barba [4]

The end is the final comment, it is the lens through which all retrospective glances will be focused and it is the twist in the tail that determines what the spectator will be left with once the performance is over.

By the last couple of weeks of rehearsal the performance was like a boat reaching the end of a long journey and being indecisive about where to cast anchor. It was not a question of what material to use for the ending, but how to use it. It was as though Barba could not decide what nature of ending the performance should have, what taste it should leave in the mouth of the spectators. The ending was in a state of permanent re-elaboration up until the premiere.

The initial ending, created at the very beginning of the process, was a soft, almost sentimental one in which two hats, one male and one female, were layed side by side on the door, which had a sheet on it, so that it looked like a bed. Barba replaced this almost immediately with Jan's scene. Jan's scene is violent and dynamic, giving an up-beat, disturbing ending. Initially he did his scene with a lot of knives, but these were replaced with the shovel and a burning bow-tie. As he does his scene, the others sing 'Can't You See the Clouds Gathering' and stamp around him. Barba; 'Jan's scene has been moved to the end because it is a scene that unites all the actors, they are all in it. The ending must be comprehensive. [5]

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4 Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe* (London: Routledge,1995), p.170-171.

5 'Work Diary: *Kaosmos*'.

The manner in which 'Can't You See the Clouds Gathering' was sung varied. At one point it was very light, even comic: all the actors exited singing 'Can't you see the clouds gathering' in party-time fashion, with Iben pretending to shoot members of the audience, then the actors re-entered the stage to drink wine and have a chat in a 'private' mode. In contrast to this elements of violence were tried out: an 'ethnic' child's outfit was carried on by Kai, and at a signal from Torgeir, Jan punched it, then scooped it up onto his shovel, placed it on the door and was then to set it alight and leave it to burn. This action was created in response to the newspaper headlines about the burning of a household of immigrants by German neo-Nazis. *Kaosmos* had begun with an idea about the collapse of Communism, and now it was concluding with the re-emergence of Nazism. The burning of the clothes was never actually tried out, but the idea was transferred to the burning of the bow-tie. Two other elements of violence that were also tried out were the sound of smashing bottles behind one of the screens and the sound of marching feet as the actors leave the room at the end. Both these sounds were evocative of violent, paramilitary activity. The contrasts between the comedy and the violence were, however, too strong. The two styles did not manage to integrate and comment on each other and thus rendered each other mutually incongruous. They were also extremely obvious within their own genres - there was no room for interpretation, and therefore, at the crucial moment, responsibility was retracted from the spectator. Both the obvious comedy and the obvious violence were dropped and replaced with a perhaps paler, but more sophisticated tonality. The ending is now far more subtle and disturbing.

The ending repeats the three-tiered structure also used at the beginning of the performance:

1) Julia reads the final part of the Kafka story in which The Man From the Country learns that his life-time of waiting has been in vain and that he is now going to die. Torgeir's pocket watch chimes, he says 'Time's up'. He then asks Jan 'Is this theatre?', who replies 'Yes, this is theatre - a thread made of mischief and guile. The character dies and the actor returns to life.' Julia then dresses Torgeir in a skirt and a chest bandage. Roberta, Isabel, Tina and Kai undress to reveal their modern day street clothing. They sing 'Can't you see the clouds gathering', stamping around the stage. Torgeir jumps into Jan's arms and they all exit together. Only Iben and Julia are left on stage, the lights come up and they sit totally still.

2) Julia lays corn along the edges of the door-frame. She closes the door and the corn stands up around its edges, creating the image of a corn field. Frans enters, his face covered by a mask of corn. He starts to play a pastoral melody. Julia, Iben and Frans exit to his music, leaving the stage empty.

3) Just as they leave the empty stage there is a crash of boots, voices and accordions from off-stage. Roberta, Tina, Isabel, Kai, Jan and Torgeir re-enter in a much more violent version of 'Can't you see the clouds gathering'. As they charge around the stage they smash the corn-field on the door. They swirl off stage just as quickly as they came on. Only Roberta remains, and as the song stops she comes to a sudden stand-still, and in the rapidly dimming light she takes a long, questioning look at the spectators. Roberta exits and all the actors leave the room, the light comes up on the door, now covered in crushed corn.

The ending closes-by-degrees, following the pattern of the beginning. First the Kafka text ends, then The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die ends his dialogue and finally the non-textual ending occurs, in which music gives way to silence. In this way

the beginning and end come to resemble each other, and as Barba writes; 'The real ending is that which meets its own beginning' [6] The integrity of the performance does not therefore reside, so much, in specific conclusions or resolutions, but in its ability to be at once closed in on itself as well as connected to the outside world, whether that be the private world of each spectator or the shared political world. The Odin performances are self-sufficient, but not purely self-reflexive. They exist as living, independent entities, that nevertheless are deeply connected to life outside of the performance. Mirella Schino, a theatre scholar who has followed the work of the Odin for many years writes:

> *A ben vedere, l'unicità dell'Odin non sta nella forza o nella bellezza dei suoi spettacoli. Credo che stia, piuttosto, nella sua capacità di costruire uno spettacolo come un intero mondo, talmente denso di riferimenti da essere chiuso in sè, eppure fornito di ganci acuti, che sempre fanno presa su qualcosa di esterno al teatro.*
>
> On taking a close look, it can be seen that the unity of the Odin does not lie in the strength or beauty of its performances. I think, rather, that it lies in its capacity to construct a performance that is like a whole world, so dense in references that it is closed in itself, and yet it has sharp hooks, that always catch hold of something external to the theatre. [7]

The Spectators

Before the real 'public' spectators arrived, there were invited spectators, who functioned as test audiences. Three different types of test audience were introduced. The first type consisted of what could be called 'collaborators', insiders who are theatre critics and scholars and have been collaborators of Odin Teatret for years. They were very much party to the process, and would have private consultations with Barba in which they discussed and contributed to the thinking behind the performance.

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6 *The Paper Canoe*, p.170.

7 Mirella Schino, 'Sakuntàla amongst the olive trees' (unpublished text, Italy), p.30.

'Collaborators' were invited quite near the beginning of the process, and again, two months before the end.

Then there were the 'observers', all of whom came in the last month of rehearsals, and were witness mostly to the work on the last technical details. They were: an English theatre director, an Italian student photographer and two Danish women, one of whom was an actor, and the other who was a university student. All of them were visiting the Odin for the first time, and all were asked to contribute ideas and make suggestions, each being encouraged to contribute their special skills both inside and outside of the room, as is typical for guests of the Odin.

In many ways the 'observers' were also a first step to 'going public' with the performance. They were useful barometers and they introduced the actors to the effect spectators would have on the work, at a stage before it was too late for the actors to adapt or for last minute changes to take place.

Two weeks after the 'observers' arrived, the first open rehearsal took place. This introduced the third kind of test audience, the 'guinea-pig spectators'. These were groups of school-children, and adults in higher education. Brook explains why it is useful to show the rehearsals to children:

> This is always very revealing, and a couple of hours carries our work several weeks ahead: we can see clearly what is good, what is bad, what we have understood, where we have made false guesses, and so together we discover many essential truths about what a play needs. Children are far better and more precise than most friends and drama critics, they have no prejudices, no theories, no fixed ideas. They come wanting to be fully involved in what they experience, but if they are not interested, they have no reason to hide their lack of attention - we see it at once and can read it truly as a failure on our part. [8]

The main function of the test audiences, apart from obliging/allowing the actors to now perform rather than rehearse, was to give some indication of where the performance

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8 Peter Brook, *There are no Secrets* (London: Methuen,1993), p.115.

became boring, too confusing or in some way ceased to function. In other words what did and what did not communicate. It was also the first time in which the moments of comedy, shock, pathos, etc. became truly evident. That which had in some ways become routine in rehearsal came to life with the laugh of the spectators and the unexpected actions regained all their interest-value before their unsuspecting eyes. Equally that which in rehearsal had seemed to be a moment of symbolic value, such as the unexpected apparition of Frans with a mask of corn, turned out to be comic. A further factor highlighted by the 'guinea-pig spectators' was the extent and effect of the use of simultaneous montage. The spectators would focus on one action, entirely oblivious to another action taking place in another part of the stage, (until their attention was drawn to it by a give away sound). Like the spectators at a tennis match their heads could be seen turning from one end of the stage to the other, the only difference being that instead of all heads turning in the same direction, in pursuit of the same ball, they all turned in different directions, in pursuit of different actions.

At the end of *Kaosmos* there is usually a short silence, as the spectators realize that that really was the end, and recover from the intimidating last images. On rare occasions no one claps, but more frequently the clapping now starts. Sometimes this peters out as the actors do not come back on stage to receive the applause. Often spectators may comment that they find this embarrassing, or that they would have liked the opportunity to show their gratitude in some way. At other times the spectators clap louder and louder when they realize the actors are not coming back, so that they might be heard from back-stage. Barba believes that when a performance really works, when it has really touched the spectators, there is a silence at the end. The automatic response of clapping is overcome by a more sincere, more deeply felt, response.

Following are some short extracts from my diary that document the run up to the premiere. I include them not because they contain principles or techniques, but because perhaps it is important to see how, even after so many months of rehearsal and so many years of experience, the confrontation with the public is always a risk, a moment of challenge.

29 March 1993

We had our first *åben prove* (open rehearsal) today. It was frightening. Technical problems abounded and the rhythm of the performance was stilted and slow. Instead of a mystifying overlapping of images, actions and scenes, it felt like a series of unconnected sequences with very obvious seams. It was the first time I saw the montage so clearly, there was no weaving, just patch-work.

In the afternoon Eugenio changed the end *again*, (it changes every day). It seems a bit less slow and stilted now, not quite so obviously just a series of different endings. He also changed the beginning.

30 March 1993

Our second open rehearsal. Yesterday's audience were 12-15 year olds. They had seemed rather bored and gave a lame clap at the end. Today's audience were adults. They were more attentive, and gave a big long clap at the end. This is no consolation though as the end, as the performance itself did not go better.

After the rehearsal Eugenio said that the ending didn't work because they all just slide out, it is not a powerful ending. To Roberta, who is the last to exit he said: 'You must exit like Napoleon did from history, with a bang.'

31 March 1993

The students from Århus university came to see the performance today. Eugenio asked them afterwards; 'Does the frustration at not being able to see all the actions dominate the performance? Does it give it something?'

1 April 1993

Today we had the premiere. We wondered what Eugenio meant by putting it on April Fool's day. The performance isn't finished and we all know it. It went okay. The spectators responded very well, but the performance still feels insecure. The premiere is not a culmination, but rather just another point in the process. Eugenio is most concerned by the yellow canvas floor, which has become wrinkly and faded where we have washed it. Today he also suggested that the first row of seating be removed and an extra two rows added at the back, so that all the audience would be seated much higher, above the performance. He said that the performance was much better seen from above than close up, as this gave a perspective on the patterns, rather than on just the single elements. He then said that it had always been his dream to put the audience up high, above head level. (The seating has, however, remained as it was).

12 April 1993

We continue to work on the performance. Soon it is to tour South America. Today Iben asked Eugenio if he thought the performance was fragile. He replied that *Kaosmos* had no story that could be followed all the way through, and that it was an actors' performance. He said that no more could be done in dramaturgical or

directorial terms, some scenes would still change a lot, but now it was up to the actors. He said that after fifteen to twenty performances he would begin to be able to see how the performance lived through the actors. But, he warned them, they must not *do* too much.

Barba and the actors contined to work on various details of the performance for at least a year after it began touring. This, however, is as far as the official period of rehearsals went. The performance was now finished.

Following is the performance-text of *Kaosmos*.

KAOSMOS

Having described, thus far, the process of making *Kaosmos* it is now time to look at the result of that process, the performance itself. The finished performance must necessarily be described in some way, it is after all the *raisôn d'etre*, the justification, for the process. The difficulty however is that the very nature of *Kaosmos* is to evade narrative description, it cannot be reduced to a simple summation of stories, though it does contain some simple stories.

The basic problem with trying to describe it, is that it is neither possible nor relevant to answer the question 'what is it about?' The triplicate title : 'KAOSMOS - The Ritual of the Door - Inspired by the legend of the man who doesn't want to die' [1] is Barba's way of warning the spectator that the performance is about many things. In many ways it is about how it is constructed, both as a self-referential look at theatre, but more extensively as a molecular study through theatre of how the wider natural, social and scientific realities function. It does not so much speak of chaos and cosmos as borrow the structures of the one and the other. *Kaosmos* is about the spectators' experience.

Following are some different accounts of the performance by; Ferdinando Taviani, Nicola Savarese and Janne Risum, all long-standing collaborators and documentors of the work of Odin Teatret. These accounts are followed by the full 'performance-text' of *Kaosmos*.

Ferdinando Taviani focuses on the experience of the spectator:

> It is difficult to describe *Kaosmos* objectively. In fact I think it is impossible. An objective account would be contrary to the nature of this performance.

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1 This is the full and official title of *Kaosmos*, as printed in the programme.

It is not one of those'difficult' productions (apart from the fact of the Danish language). It is rather a performance about the difficulties and pure pleasures of the spectator. The dramaturgical technique of *Kaosmos* consists in a complex strategy of intertwinings, condensations and fractures that allow for the abolition of the conventional term called 'the objective meaning' of the play - in practice implying the aspects of the plot which it is possible to summarize.

Kaosmos liberates itself from this kind of objectivity (which is generally prescribed to theatres) precisely because of its precision, its lack of vagueness. Its rigour is full of stories, but it tends towards emptiness. Just as the combining of colours is said to create white. [2]

Nicola Savarese, on the other hand, focuses on the stories the performance contains:

> *Della storia, in definitiva, poco importa. Le storie intanto sono due e molto semplici. Nella prima un uomo bussa alla porta per entrare nel regno della Felicità e della Salvezza: un guardiano glielo impedisce e l'attesa dura tutta una vita. Questa attesa è la vita. La seconda storia racconta di una madre che cerca il suo bambino rapito dalla morte: anche questa ricerca dura tutta una vita e ciò le permette di conoscere tutti i mali del mondo. Così quando finalmente ritrova il figlio, la madre lo preferisce morto piuttosto che in preda alla sventura. Queste due storie - l'attesa, la ricerca - come dice candidamente anche il programma dello spettacolo, si prolungano quanto una vita e diventano 'l'immagine della festa e dello spreco dell'esistenza'.*
>
> *Si vedrà perciò una festa di paese o forse una sacra rappresentazione, una morality play messa in scena dalla comunità in cui le due storie vengono raccontate con azioni e parole. La gente del paese partecipa interpretando i vari personaggi e quando gli attori finiscono la proprio parte, smettono i panni dei personaggi generosamente interpretati - escono dalla rappresentazione e tornano ad essere lo spazzacamino, la lattaia, lo studente, la maestrina e il farmacista.*

The stories are not that important. There are, however, two of them, and they are very simple. In the first a man knocks at the door in order to enter the realm of Happiness and Salvation; the doorkeeper forbids him entry and he waits for a life-time. This waiting is life. The second story tells of a mother seeking her child who has been stolen away by death. This search also lasts a life-time, and this enables her to encounter all the ills of the world. Therefore, when she finally finds her son the mother prefers him dead, rather than victim to misfortune. These two stories - the wait, the search - as the programme of the performance also candidly says, last a life-time and represent 'both the celebration and waste of existence.'

> Therefore we see the village celebrations, or perhaps we see a sacred performance, a morality play, staged by the community in which the two stories are told through actions and words. The people of the village take part, playing the roles of the different characters and when the actors finish playing their roles they take off the costumes of the characters whom they have been playing so generously - they

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2 Ferdinando Taviani, 'A Theatre of Ice and Warmth: on the Thirtieth Anniversary of Odin', *NTQ* vol.XI, n.42, (May 1995), p.162.

> leave the performance and return to being the street-sweeper, the milk-maid, the student, the teacher, the chemist. [3]

Though Savarese counts only two stories there is a third implicit in his description - that of the village and the villagers who stage the two stories. Janne Risum also counts three stories. She shares the first two suggested by Savarese, those of the The Mother and The Man From the Country, her third story however is not that of the villagers, but of The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die:

> *Kaosmos* is a montage which links three different stories so that they connect as three-in-one - as three complementary manifestations of the circular art of story-telling. They form a meandering pattern which relates to an invisible epicentre, and in this way is only the visible manifestation of an incalculable web. Each story is a different aspect of the life and death condition of existence (...) Three stories, three protagonists. One protagonist accepts the law. The other revolts against it. The third embodies it. [4]

Thomas Bredsdorff, a Danish journalist who has followed the work of Odin Teatret for many years, sums up the tension in the performance between the telling of simple stories and the a highly complex structure of the performance, that is itself un-tellable:

> *Det problematiske ved den på mange måder vellykkede Kaosmos er at den placerer sig et ikke helt klart sted mellem de to. Den vil på samme tid fortælle en historie og være et åbent energifelt.*
>
> The problem with *Kaosmos*, which is, for the most part well-made, is that it places itself in an unclear position between the two. It both wants to tell stories and at the same time to be an open energy-field. [5]

Given this variety of descriptions I have decided not to add yet another description, which tells yet another tale, but rather to attempt to render the performance itself, in written words. Thereby I hope not so much (although inevitably to an extent) to provide my interpretation of the performance, but to attempt to give the reader the experience of the spectator, in as much as they must themselves extract

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3 Nicola Savarese, 'Trent'anni di 'Kaosmos': Sette Argomenti sull'Odin Teatret' (unpublished text, Italy, 1994), p.5.

4 Janne Risum, 'Kaosmos' (unpublished text, Denmark,1993), p.14.

5 Thomas Bredsdorff, 'Uden Ord, med Undertekst', *Ilden i Glasset, Aktuelle Teaterproblemer* 32, Århus (1994), p.24.

their own performance from what is written. In other words to create a text that is half documentation, half interpretation.

Following is a notation of the whole of *Kaosmos*. This performance-text is an attempt at giving an over-view of the finished performance. It is based on the notation Barba asked me to make during rehearsals, so that the many changes he implemented each day would not be forgotten and lost. The actors received four updates of the performance-text during the eighteen month process. The performance-text shown here is based on the fourth and last version, which was concluded shortly after the premiere. This is a simplified version, leaving out some details so that it does not become a jungle of indecipherable actions. The writing was a constant choice between relating the actual, truthful chaos, which would have been incomprehensible and creating an artificially organized coherence. The tension between chaos and clarity has lead me to think in categories of the 'truthful performance' and the 'artificial documentation'. Given the inevitable eventuality however, that these two realities should remain irreconciliable, it is perhaps most constructive to merely view them as two 'parallel truths'. The fact of having simplified the notation of the performance, however, implies that I have chosen what I perceive to be the main focus/focuses of each scene, thus even this attempt at a non-interpretative notation of the performance is necessarily subjective and personal in that it has a point of view, in the same way as the photographs used to illustrate the performance text have a point of view. I have divided the scenes under headings. This gives them a false sense of separateness but the headings are intended as points of orientation in this written performance-text. Finally, I have used some interpretative description in an attempt to bring the text alive, and not leave it at the purely technical

level, as I do not consider that purely technical information could begin to convey the experience of seeing the performance.

Kaosmos

The Ritual of the Door

Inspired by the legend of the man who doesn't want to die

Kai Bredholt	**The Sailor** who has seen a mermaid
Roberta Carreri	**The Mother** who searches for her child stolen away by Death
Jan Ferslev	**The Doorkeeper**
Tina Nielsen	**The Village Bride**
Iben Nagel Rasmussen	**The Man From the Country** (refered to as 'he', even though played by a woman)
Isabel Ubeda	**The Doorkeeper's Twin Sister**
Julia Varley	**Doña Musica**, who comforts those who laugh until they cry
Torgeir Wethal	**The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die** (from now on shortened to: The-Man-Who)
Frans Winther	**The Disinherited Son of the Devil**

Key to the languages of the text

All the texts are shown in English, for the sake of comprehensibility. In the performance they are however spoken/sung in the actor's mother tongue, as follows:

Danish - The Man From the Country, The Doorkeeper, The Village Bride, The Sailor.

English - Doña Musica.

Italian - The Mother.

Norwegian - The-Man-Who.

Spanish - The Doorkeeper's Sister.

Before the Law, is spoken in English by Doña Musica, with each line being sung in Danish by the others after her.

The story of a mother is spoken in Danish by The Man From the Country and translated to Italian by The Mother in parts.

The Seventh is sung in Danish by all.

The dialogue between The-Man-Who and The Doorkeeper occurs in Danish and Norwegian.

Key to the print

SPEECH IS IN CAPITALS.

Stage directions are in roman type and indented.

SONGS ARE IN MINI-CAPITALS.

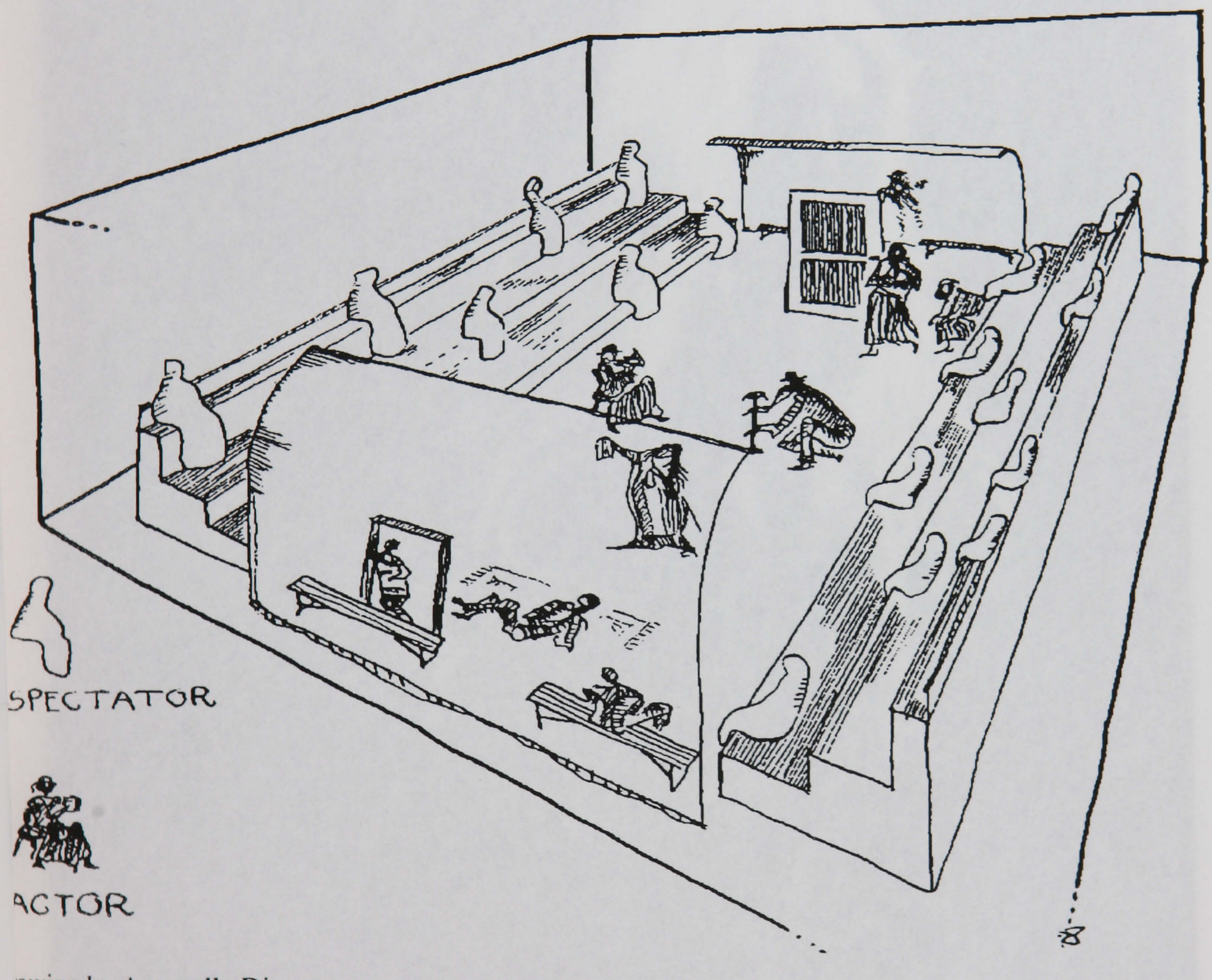
A Map of Kaosmos

The performance lasts 1 hr.20 mins and has nine actors (four men and five women), three of the men are also musicians. The playing space is rectangular. One of the short ends of the rectangle is called the South and the other is called the North. At either short end stands a white screen. The screens are about three metres high and curved at the top. In front of each screen there are two white benches. There are lights along the bottom and top edges of the screens and a single lamp hanging above the centre of the stage. There is audience seating along both of the long sides of the rectangle. The floor is covered by a sandy-yellow canvas. As the spectators enter from the North The Doorkeeper sits at the South. He waits for them to be seated, looking at them with a gaze that is at once threatening and seductive in its intensity. He sits next to a tall, rectangular shaped object, which has an oriental carpet hanging over it. It is, in fact, a door. The violin and accordion are playing gently from behind the Southern screen.

Scene 1: A handkerchief becomes a butterfly

As the last spectator is seated The Doorkeeper sounds the chord on his shovel which has a piano string attached to its length. The violin and accordion music stops. The Doorkeeper thus immediately establishes himself as a figure of authority. The lights go down at this sound and Doña Musica enters in the darkness, she stands in the centre, slowly the lights comes up. Doña Musica pulls a lace hanky from her sleeve, and knots it into the shape of a butterfly. She moves it, causing its wings to flutter. She has the long grey hair of a

Drawing of the set of *Kaosmos*, as shown in the programme of the performance.



awing by Antonella Diana

Doña Musica pulls a lace hanky from her sleeve and knots it into a butterfly. She makes it fly.
Photo: Jan Rüsz.

Doña Musica's butterfly flies and The Doorkeeper strikes a harsh chord on his shovel. There is a sound of gasping from off-stage. They watch as The-Man-Who enters, dripping wet.

Photo: Jan Rüsz.

crone, but the wide, naive eyes of a child. Her transformation of the hanky into a butterfly is both a game and a spell. The Doorkeeper strikes a harsh chord on his shovel and there is a sound of gasping from behind the Northern screen.

Scene 2: The-Man-Who arrives

The Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die enters, his hair and face dripping wet. Perhaps he is a drowned man, perhaps he has just been violently baptized. He speaks to The Doorkeeper:

I'M..I 'M LOOKING FOR THE LAND WHERE NO ONE DIES.

The Village Bride enters at a run. She sees The-Man-Who, and throws herself at his feet, clutching his knees. She says to him, in an intimate voice:

IF YOU WISH YOU CAN WASH ME, CLEAN.

In response he takes out his pocket-watch and looks at it, as though ignoring her or looking for an excuse to escape her clutches. The Village Bride stands and leads The-Man-Who to the sitting Doorkeeper, and sits him on his knee. The other characters enter one by one. The Sailor plays his accordion and all start singing:

IF YOU DWELL IN THIS WORLD,

YOUR MOTHER WILL GIVE BIRTH TO YOU SEVEN TIMES.

ONCE IN A BURNING HOUSE,

ONCE UNDER ICY WATERS,

ONCE IN A SEA OF WHEAT,

ONCE IN AN ECHOING MONASTERY,

The Village Bride throws herself at the feet of The-Man-Who and says: 'If you wish you can wash me, clean'. He looks at his pocket-watch, as though wishing to evade or ignore her. Photo: Jan Rüsz.

ONCE AMONG SOWS IN A YARD.

SIX TIMES YOU WILL SCREAM,

BUT WHAT CAN YOU DO?

YOU WILL BE THE SEVENTH.

All the women push and slap The-Man-Who across the stage, laughing as though they find him both cute and ridiculous. As he reaches the other end he is caught between The Mother and The Bride, each holding one of his arms.

Scene 3: The Man From the Country knocks for the first time

Doña Musica speaks, facing The Doorkeeper, who is standing in front of the rectangular shape covered by the carpet. Each of her lines is repeated in Danish by the others singing:

BEFORE THE LAW STANDS A DOORKEEPER

TO THIS DOORKEEPER THERE COMES A MAN FROM THE COUNTRY

AND PRAYS FOR ADMITTANCE TO THE LAW

BUT THE DOORKEEPER SAYS

THAT HE CANNOT GRANT ADMITTANCE AT THE MOMENT

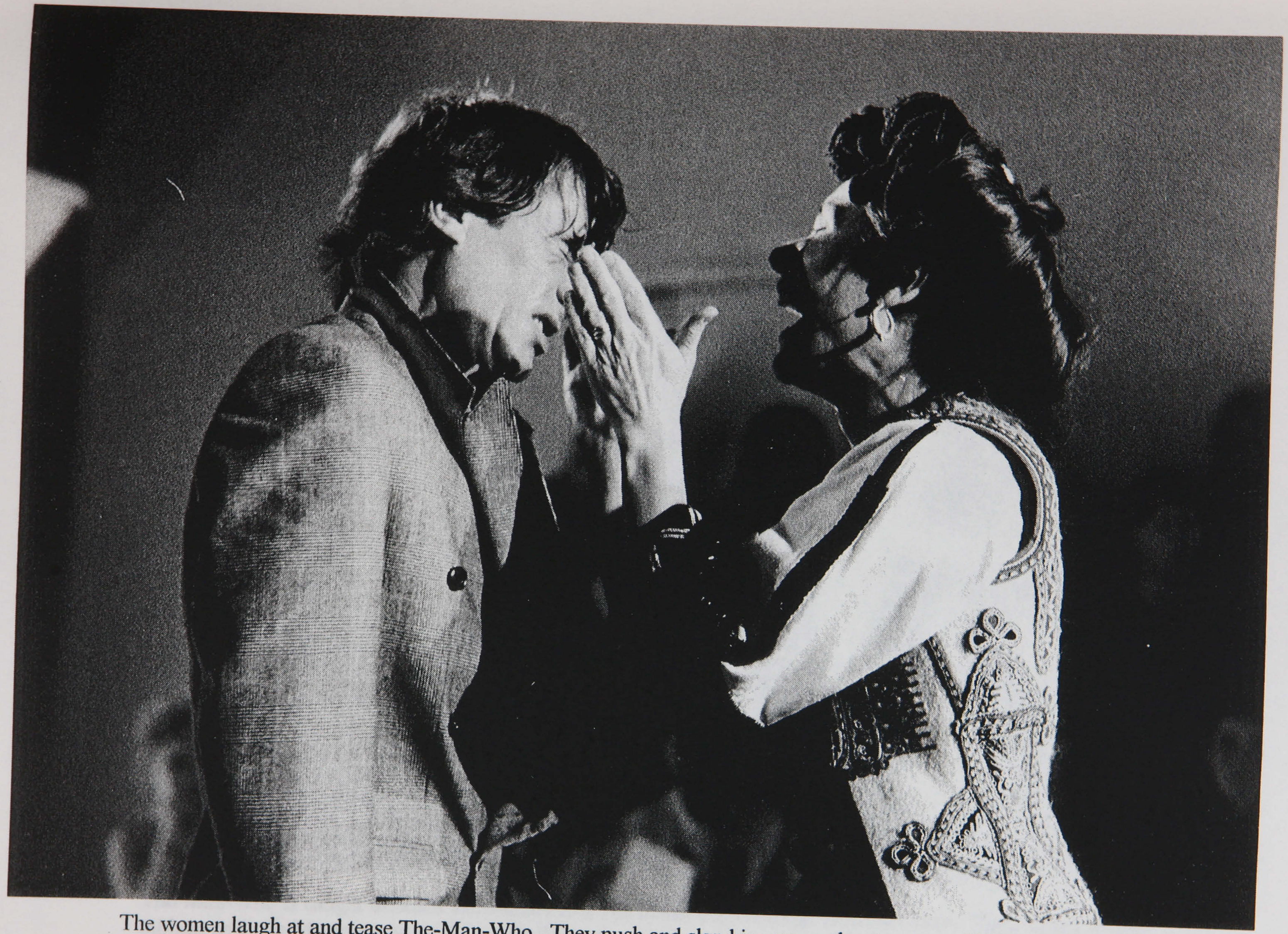
THE MAN ASKS IF HE WILL BE ALLOWED IN LATER

The Man From the Country advances and knocks timidly on the rectangular shape, it tips gently backwards.

IT IS POSSIBLE

SAYS THE DOORKEEPER

BUT NOT AT THE MOMENT



The women laugh at and tease The-Man-Who. They push and slap him across the stage. Photo: Jan Rüsz.

The-Man-Who is caught between The Mother and The Bride, each holding one of his arms. They remain in this tableau as Doña Musica now speaks the Kafka text.
Photo: Jan Rüsz.

The Man From the Country takes the carpet off the rectangle and places it on the floor. In doing this he reveals the rectangular shape to be a white door, with various large books screwed to its front.

Scene 4: The presentation

The Doorkeeper is sitting beside the door, all the others are standing still in the space. The Doorkeeper presents each character and as he does so each does a short extract from later in the performance. He says:

THE RITUAL OF THE DOOR HAS BEGUN:

ROBERTA PLAYS THE MOTHER WHO IS LOOKING FOR HER CHILD, STOLEN AWAY BY DEATH

TINA IS THE VILLAGE BRIDE

IBEN PLAYS THE MAN FROM THE COUNTRY

I AM THE DOORKEEPER AND ISABEL IS MY TWIN SISTER

JULIA PLAYS DOÑA MUSICA, WHO COMFORTS THOSE WHO LAUGH UNTIL THEY CRY

TORGEIR IS THE-MAN-WHO-DOES-NOT-WANT-TO-DIE

FRANS IS THE DISINHERITED SON OF THE DEVIL

Frans is not on stage, but behind the Southern screen. The lights dim and the silhouette of Frans appears on the screen. He is sitting under a tree in a cornfield, playing his violin.

KAI PLAYS THE SAILOR WHO HAS SEEN A MERMAID

Kai walks to the door singing a song about the fears encountered by a sailor at sea. He ends his song standing, in a semi-crucifix, on the stool in front of the

Door. On one side of him stands The Mother and on the other The Doorkeeper. The Doorkeeper's Sister sits kneeling in front of him. They form a tableau. Doña Musica and The Man From the Country stand centre stage and The-Man-Who and The Bride are sitting at the opposite end. The stage becomes still.

Scene 5: The Man From the Country prays for admittance

Doña Musica:

BEFORE THE LAW STANDS A DOORKEEPER

TO THIS DOORKEEPER THERE COMES A MAN FROM THE COUNTRY

AND PRAYS FOR ADMITTANCE TO THE LAW

The Man From the Country goes and kneels before The Sailor, who continues to stand on the stool in front of the door.

Scene 6: The door is moved

The violin starts playing the melody of *The Seventh*.

The Doorkeeper and his Sister carry the door on their backs and move it to the other end of the stage. As they walk The Man From the Country runs behind them and knocks on the door. Behind him walks Doña Musica, wearing the carpet as a cape, with The Mother as her cape-bearer. The Doorkeeper and his Sister put the door down and Doña Musica and The Mother place the carpet on the floor in front of it.

The Sailor ends his song standing in a semi-crucifix on the stool in front of the door. The Mother supports him on one side and The Doorkeeper stands on his other side. The Doorkeeper's Sister sits kneeling in front of him. They remain in this tableau as Doña Musica's speaks the Kafka text. Photo: Jan Rüsz.

The Doorkeeper and his Sister carry the door on their backs. Photo: Jan Rüsz.

Scene 7: The-Man-Who and The Bride cross the threshold

The door has been placed in front of The-Man-Who and The Bride. Despite The Doorkeeper's attempts to keep the door closed they manage to burst through the doorway and cross the carpet. The-Man-Who shouts in excitement:

LOOK, I GO MY WAY WITH THE STEP OF A FREE MAN, WITHOUT A HORDE AND WITHOUT A TRIBE. TO THE SONG OF THE HOURGLASS I WHISTLE FOR MY PEOPLE, I WHISTLE FOR MY PAGAN PEOPLE.

The Bride again offers herself to him. She sings to him in Danish:

THOU HAST A LAP FULL OF SEED,

AND THIS IS A FINE COUNTRY.

WHY DOST THOU NOT CAST THY SEED

AND LIVE IN IT MERRILY?

The-Man-Who answers:

SHALL I CAST IT ON THE SAND

AND TURN IT INTO FRUITFUL LAND?

The Doorkeeper goes behind the door and slams it shut in annoyance with these two who have managed to cross his jealously guarded threshold. The-Man-Who and The Bride lift the door and The Doorkeeper falls to his knees and crawls towards The Mother. As he reaches her he stops and lies on the floor. The Doorkeeper's authority has been usurped and he has temporarily died. The-Man-Who and The Bride rest the door on his back, it becomes his coffin.

Despite The Doorkeeper's attempts to keep the door closed, The-Man-Who and The Bride manage to burst through the doorway and cross the carpet.
Photo: Fiora Bemporard.

The Bride sings to The-Man-Who, offering herself to him. The Doorkeeper watches voyeuristically from his doorway.
Photo: Fiora Bemporard.

Scene 8: The ocean dance

As The Doorkeeper lies under the door all the others suddenly explode into a wild dance as they celebrate their release from the tyranny of The Doorkeeper's authority. This is a moment of chaos and mass frenzied action with loud music and singing. They sing verse two of *The Seventh*:

IF YOU MEET AN ENEMY ON THE ROAD,

HE WILL FIND SEVEN TURNED AGAINST HIM.

ONE STARTING HIS DAY OF REST,

ONE ENDING HIS WORKING DAY,

ONE TEACHING THE POOR FOR FREE,

ONE THROWN INTO DEEP WATER,

ONE IS THE SEED BEFORE THE FOREST,

ONE IS PROTECTED BY CRAZED ANCESTORS.

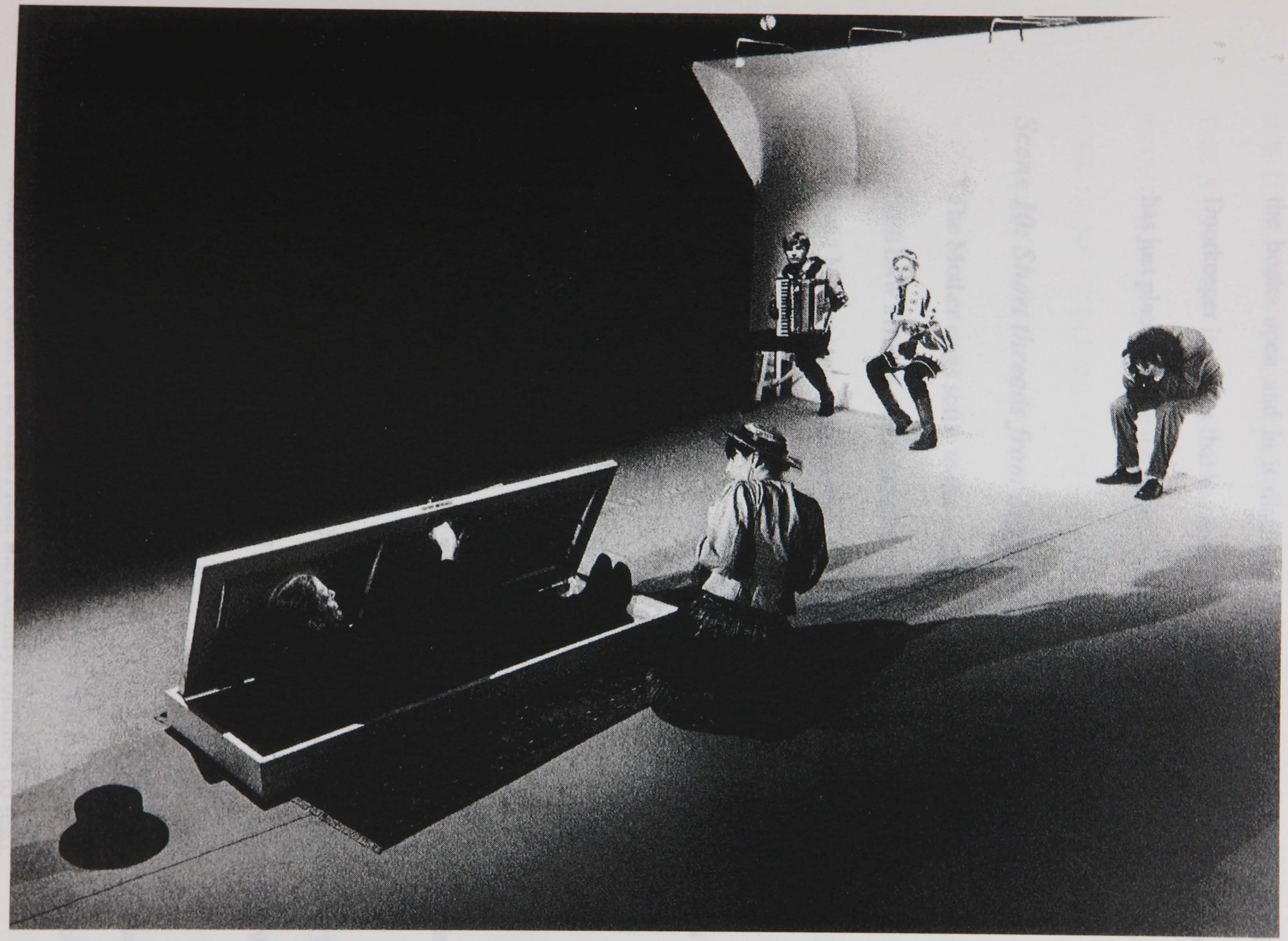
BUT NO DECEPTIONS WILL HELP YOU.

YOU WILL BE THE SEVENTH.

Scene 9: The Man From the Country awakens The Doorkeeper

Exhausted after the festivities the villagers retire in silence to either end of the stage. Only The Doorkeeper, who is still lying under the door, remains, and crouched beside him is The Man From the Country, who knocks timidly on the door. This simple act of continued humble submission is enough to resurrect The Doorkeeper, who opens the door, sits up and looks around like a confused vampire just awakening from his tomb. He steps out of the door-frame and

As The Doorkeeper lies under the door all the others suddenly explode into a wild dance. Photo: Jan Rüsz.



The Doorkeeper is lying under the door. The Man From the Country knocks. The Doorkeeper opens the door, sits up and looks around like a confused vampire just awakening from his tomb. Photo: Jan Rüsz.

lets the door slam shut. The Man From the Country knocks on the door again and begins pulling at the various books that are screwed to it. He pulls one of the books open and in it discovers another book, which he removes. The Doorkeeper indicates that he should go and sit on the stool which Doña Musica has just placed beside the door.

Scene 10: Short threads from different stories are woven

The Mother sings softly to the violin:

BEFORE THE LAW STANDS A DOORKEEPER...

Doña Musica stands on the door and makes wind sounds and sings:

IF YOU DWELL IN THIS WORLD, YOUR MOTHER WILL...

The Doorkeeper makes the sound of a clock ticking, tapping his fingers against his ukulele.

Scene 11: The Mother's child is stolen away by Death

The Man From the Country reads from the book he has just taken from the door, in Danish:

A MOTHER SAT BY THE BEDSIDE OF HER LITTLE CHILD, IN GREAT GRIEF BECAUSE SHE WAS AFRAID IT WAS GOING TO DIE. THERE WAS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR AND IN CAME A POOR OLD MAN.

The Doorkeeper enters, playing the part of the old man. He is playing a ukulele, which is covered in a small white dress and a red head-scarf, so that it looks like a child. The Man From the Country continues to read:

IT WAS THE MIDDLE OF WINTER AND THERE WAS A BITING WIND. AS THE OLD MAN WAS TREMBLING WITH COLD AND THE CHILD HAD GONE OFF TO SLEEP, THE MOTHER WENT AND PUT A SMALL MUG OF BEER ON THE STOVE TO WARM IT UP FOR HIM. THE OLD MAN SAT GENTLY ROCKING THE CHILD, AND THE MOTHER LOOKED AT HER SICK CHILD. "YOU DON'T THINK I'LL LOSE HIM DO YOU?"

The Mother looks at The Doorkeeper, who nods his head

AND THE OLD MAN, WHO WAS DEATH HIMSELF, NODDED STRANGELY. THE MOTHER LOOKED DOWN INTO HER LAP AND TEARS RAN DOWN HER CHEEKS. HER HEAD BECAME SO HEAVY THAT SHE FELL ASLEEP.

The Mother closes her eyes and walks towards the door, where she crouches down. The Doorkeeper leaves, still carrying the ukulele dressed as a child. He goes and lies in the lap of his Sister who is sitting nearby on the floor.

BUT SHE SLEPT ONLY FOR AN INSTANT.

The Mother opens her eyes and stands.

SHE SHOOK WITH COLD. THE OLD MAN WAS GONE

The Mother looks around.

AND HER LITTLE CHILD WAS GONE, HE HAD TAKEN IT WITH HIM. THE POOR MOTHER RUSHED OUT OF THE HOUSE CALLING FOR HER CHILD.

The Mother steps towards The Doorkeeper, and then goes in the opposite direction. She stamps, throws up her arms and shouts desperately. She is like a mare who has lost her foal, pawing the ground and whinnying into the wilderness. The Man From the Country tries to calm her:

SHH, SHHHHH

Doña Musica, who has all the while been lying on the door, now stands up on it slowly, singing quietly, like a very old crone, and as she sits again The Man From the Country continues:

THERE, OUT IN THE SNOW, SAT A WOMAN IN LONG, BLACK CLOTHES, WHO SAID "DEATH HAS BEEN IN YOUR ROOM, I SAW HIM HURRY AWAY WITH YOUR LITTLE CHILD." "JUST TELL ME WHICH WAY HE WENT" SAID THE MOTHER. "BEFORE I TELL YOU, YOU MUST SING ME ALL THE SONGS YOU HAVE SUNG TO YOUR CHILD. I AM NIGHT AND I SAW YOUR TEARS AS YOU SUNG THEM".

Doña Musica repeats all the text spoken by The Night, in English.

The Mother lays in her lap and sings snippets of songs that are heard elsewhere in the performance. The Man From the Country interrupts her:

THE WOMAN IN THE LONG BLACK CLOTHES SAID: "GO TO THE RIGHT, INTO THE DARK FOREST, THERE I SAW DEATH RUN WITH YOUR LITTLE CHILD."

Again Doña Musica repeats this text in English and as she does so, she also points to the North. The Mother raises from her lap and goes to the North. As The Mother sets off to seek her child, The Sailor follows behind her with his accordion. He is like a protecting spirit, or an unseen bogey-man. As The Mother goes she repeats the text of her story in Italian. While The Mother is doing this The Doorkeeper's Sister sings about a girl who drowns, in Spanish. The Doorkeeper accompanies her on his ukulele as he lies in her lap. Meanwhile The Bride is again attempting to approach The-Man-Who, who sits

The Mother seeks her child. A woman in long, black clothes, tells her 'Death has been in your room, I saw him hurry away with you little child.'

Photo: Fiora Bemporard.

As The Mother seeks her child The Sailor follows behind her with his accordion. She is oblivious to him and he is like a protecting spirit, or an unseen bogey-man.
Photo: Jan Rüsz.

at the North and spits viciously into her open palms as she reaches towards him. The Mother, exhausted by her search, collapses onto the door and knocks on it. Now it is she who seeks admittance to the Door of the Law.

Scene12: Party-time dance

The Sailor plays his accordion jauntily and all the characters begin to dance. Suddenly they all stop dancing and look at The-Man-Who. He takes out his pocket watch, looks at it and says:

WE STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME.

They all continue dancing and at the end of the dance The Man From the Country falls onto one end of the door, while The Doorkeeper has stationed himself at the other end. Doña Musica, who had been dancing on the door now steps off it, cautiously, extricating herself from the argument she can sense brewing between The Doorkeeper and The Man From the Country, who is still waiting for permission to enter the door.

Scene 13: The Man From the Country tries again

The Man from the Country knocks gently on the door. The Doorkeeper responds by sounding his shovel, which he has placed across the prostrate door, physically blocking it. Again The Man From the Country knocks, this time The Doorkeeper twangs even louder.

Doña Musica speaks:

THE MAN FROM THE COUNTRY THINKS THAT THE LAW SHOULD SURELY BE ACCESSIBLE AT ALL TIMES AND TO EVERYONE.

The Man From the Country looks at The Doorkeeper and begins to rise. The Doorkeeper mirrors his movements and also rises. The Doorkeeper stands the shovel upright on the door and rests his chin on its handle, without taking his eyes off The Man from the Country.

BUT AS HE NOW TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT THE DOORKEEPER
HE DECIDES IT IS BETTER TO WAIT UNTIL HE GETS PERMISSION TO ENTER.

The Man From the Country lies down again, but this time without the tensions of possible rebellion. His acquiescence has sapped his last strength.

THE DOORKEEPER GIVES HIM A STOOL
AND LETS HIM SIT AT ONE SIDE OF THE DOOR
THERE HE SITS FOR DAYS AND YEARS.

In a final desperate attempt to enter the door The Man From the Country stretches a trembling hand across the door. The Doorkeeper twangs the string of his shovel ever more threateningly. The light begins to dim and Doña Musica helps The Man From the Country to stand and sits him on the stool beside the door. All is still and dark on stage, it is night and time to rest.

Scene 14: The Village Bride is born

The Sailor plays his mouth organ and the lights gradually come up, like the arrival of the dawn. The Village Bride sings a children's song about spring-time, in Danish. As she sings she approaches the door, she stands it upright in its frame. The-Man-Who looks at his watch and says:

KNOCK ON THE DOOR AND IT WILL BE OPENED FOR YOU.

The Bride knocks and, giggles and then opens the door and walks through it. She carries the open door on her back, and then sets it down open and horizontal, in a tent shape. She then passes through it length ways, exiting from the end through the legs of The Mother, The Man From the Country and The Doorkeeper's sister, who stand one in front of the other, legs astride, making loud noises. They are like children playing on a camping holiday, but they are also like women giving birth. The Bride passes through the birth tunnel created by their legs and comes out to stand. With one hand she holds onto the Doorkeeper's Sister. She reaches out for the silver bracelet that The-Man-Who has just handed to Doña Musica, and which she is now dangling in the air. The Bride then points accusingly at The-Man-Who and says:

THAT IS HIM.

She receives the bracelet on her out-stretched arm. Perhaps it is a dowry to her as a bride, or perhaps it is payment to her as a prostitute. She lays the door flat on the floor, leaps onto it and catching one of the long ribbons in her hair she pulls it upwards, ringing the bells and causing her head to hang, she has hung herself. But she was only joking. Immediately she jumps off the door and polka music starts.

The Bride holds onto The Doorkeeper's Sister and points accusingly at The-Man-Who, saying: 'That is him.'
Photo: Jan Rüsz.

Scene 15: The polka

As soon as the polka music starts all the characters dance to it. The-Man-Who, The Bride and The Man From the Country lift the door and carry it to the North, whooping and dancing as they go. As the music stops all sit at either the South or the North, except for The Man From the Country who continues dancing in the centre, either oblivious to the fact that he is now alone, or not caring. The Doorkeeper quickly reprimands him by sounding the chord of his shovel. The Man From the Country gets the message, but like a miffed child, doesn't mind showing that he feels wronged. He flicks his hanky over his shoulder and walks off with his nose in the air.

Scene 16: The corn dance

The Sailor and The Doorkeeper are sitting on the door which in lying flat on the floor. They begin to play a rock melody and sing about a freedom-fighter called 'Corn':

CORN WENT UNDER GROUND

HE WAS FIGHTING AGAINST UNFAIRNESS.

WITH HIS RIFLE HE FOUGHT FOR PEACE,

THEY CALLED HIM 'CORN',

AND ONE DAY HE HAD TO

GO UNDER GROUND.

ONE DAY, WHILE HE WAS LIVING UNDER GROUND

THERE SUDDENLY CAME A LETTER FROM HIS MOTHER:

MY SON YOU MUST COME QUICK

I CAN FEEL MY DAYS ARE SOON TO BE OVER.

CORN SNATCHED UP HIS LONG SHINY PISTOLS.

CORN SNATCHED UP HIS LONG SHINY PISTOLS.

HE SENT FOR HIS FASTEST HORSE

THAT COULD RIDE ALL NIGHT

THE SAFEST AND BEST

AND CORN RODE ALL NIGHT.

As The Doorkeeper and The Sailor sing and play, The Mother, Doña Musica and The Doorkeeper's Sister dance opposite them. Doña Musica is holding many lacy hankies. She drops them on the floor as she advances in to the space. She then steps on them like stepping stones. The Mother and The Doorkeeper's Sister follow her and dance along this *via dolorosa*. Then The-Man-Who enters dancing from the opposite end and the women retreat back across their 'stepping stones'. He is followed by The Bride. They dance together. The other women lure The-Man-Who to them. The Doorkeeper's Sister will not let him return to where The Bride is. She throws him violently down to the floor and every time he manages to stand she pushes him down again. He is indignant but powerless. The Man From the Country collects Doña Musica's dropped hankies and holds them in his mouth. He goes sits behind The Doorkeeper and taps him on the head and asks:

MAY I COME IN YET?

The Doorkeeper, who has stopped playing at this interruption, stands and says:

NO, NOT NOW.

and the music recommences as The Doorkeeper and Sailor walk away.

Scene 17: The-Man-Who spies on The Bride

The-Man-Who unhinges the door from its frame and carries it to centre stage.

The Bride takes the door-frame that has been left behind and turns it upright.

She stands in it like a framed picture. The-Man-Who stands behind the door and spies on her from behind it, looking round its edges and through its keyhole. He is oblivious to Doña Musica who stands just behind him pretending to smack and pinch his bottom. The Bride watches him watching her. She takes off her veil, lays it on the carpet in front of the door-frame and then retreats back into the door-frame to wait for her seductive undressing to take effect. She does not wait long. The-Man-Who throws the door to the floor, as though he were kicking a door down, and advances towards her. 'The Corn Song', which is still going from the previous scene, reaches a frenzied pitch. As The-Man-Who steps on The Bride's veil, the music stops. With this cessation The-Man-Who also stops. He remains detached from The Bride even though she is now only an arm's length away. He is unable to advance any further either because without the intoxicating music he looses his nerve, or because with its cessation he comes to his senses again and so stops in his tracks. He kneels in front of her, but with his back to her. The Bride cries silently at this latest rejection.

Doña Musica collects one of her hankies from the floor and goes to The Bride.

She says:

EVEN BUTTERFLIES MUST EARN THEIR LIVING.

The-Man-Who spies on The Bride from behind the door. He is oblivious to Doña Musica who stands just behind him pretending to smack and pinch his bottom.

Photo: Jan Rüsz.

She wipes a tear from The Bride's eye, then tucks the hanky into The Bride's breast. She takes The Doorkeeper's shovel and runs to the South with it. As she does so The Man From the Country begins to sing a comic drunkard's song and The Doorkeeper and Sailor tell him to be quiet. He continues regardless. The lights go down.

As Doña Musica reaches the South she raises the shovel to cover the only light that is still on. This causes a black-out on stage. The Doorkeeper's Sister takes the uplifted shovel from Doña Musica and slowly lowers it so that the light returns, giving the image of a sunrise on The Bride and The-Man-Who. The Bride, like bird in a cage, sings once she is released from darkness. She sings a romantic love song. At her feet The-Man-Who begins to rip her veil and bandage his hands with its pieces. The Man From the Country ignores them and fixes his make-up, [remember, he is played by a woman].

At the opposite end of the stage The Mother and Doña Musica sit on the benches quietly conversing and the silhouette of The Disinherited Son of the Devil appears behind them.

Scene 18: The Mother and the lake

The Mother stops talking with Doña Musica, stands and advances towards The-Man-Who. She deposits some water in front of him, creating a small puddle on the floor. She then takes a small, silver edged tray which is dripping with water. On it there is a picture of two swans on a lake. She holds this up for the spectators to see and then places it on the floor over the puddle. She says, in Italian:

The Bride stands in the door-frame and sings a romantic love song. At her feet The-Man-Who scrabbles on the floor and rips her veil. The Man From the Country ignores them both and fixes her make-up.

Photo: Jan Rüsz.

LET US MEET AT THE LAKE OF GOLD.

The puddle and the tray become the 'lake'. As The Mother tries to step onto the 'lake' The Man From the Country begins to read again:

THE MOTHER CAME TO A BIG LAKE, WHERE THERE WAS NEITHER SHIP NOR BOAT TO CARRY HER ACROSS, YET CROSS IT SHE MUST, IF SHE WERE TO FIND HER CHILD. SO SHE LAY DOWN AND TRIED TO DRINK UP THE LAKE.

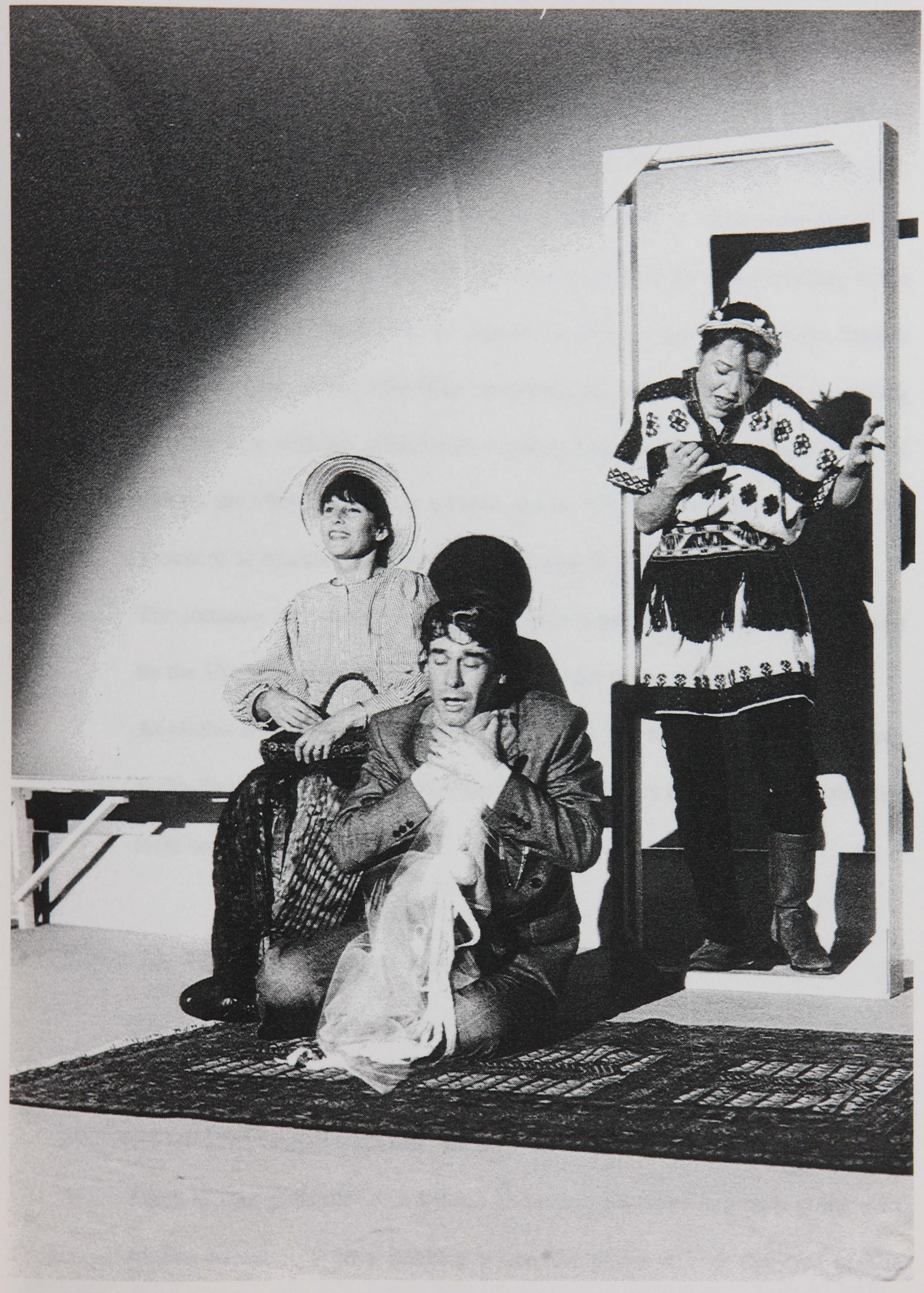
The Mother goes down on her knees, as if to drink up the lake.

"NO, THAT WILL NEVER DO", SAID THE LAKE, "LET US TWO SEE IF WE CAN'T COME TO SOME ARRANGEMENT. I COLLECT PEARLS AND YOUR EYES ARE THE TWO BRIGHTEST I HAVE EVER SEEN. IF YOU WILL WEEP THEM OUT FOR ME, I WILL CARRY YOU ACROSS TO THE GREAT GREENHOUSE WHERE DEATH LIVES AND LOOKS AFTER FLOWERS AND TREES. EACH OF THEM IS A HUMAN LIFE." "OH, I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO REACH MY CHILD," SAID THE MOTHER AND SHE WEPT STILL MORE AND HER EYES SANK TO THE BOTTOM OF THE LAKE AND BECAME TWO PRECIOUS PEARLS.

The Mother also cries this text in Italian and Doña Musica comforts her.

Scene 19: The-Man-Who experiments with suffering

The-Man-Who continues ripping the veil and scrabbling around on the carpet. His face reddens and swells like that of an angry bull-frog. But perhaps he is just a man suffering a cardiac arrest. Any way, no one comes to his aid. The image of his suffering is further enhanced when he begins bandaging his hands.



The-Man-Who tries to strangle himself. The Bride sings a romantic pastoral song. Photo: Rossella Viti.

Perhaps this is Christ bandaging his stigmata - but he is rather demonstrative in his 'suffering'. As he tries to strangle himself he appears rather gruesomely pleased with himself and his situation. Meanwhile, The Bride rocks herself in the door-frame behind him, singing. One cannot tell if she is fighting to jump out of her frame to help him, or if she is attempting to further exasperate his anguish, angry at his rejections, by threatening to send the frame crashing down on top of him. Which ever, he appears to be unaware of her. Doña Musica dances in front of The-Man-Who, mirroring his actions. Either she is seeking to empathize with his suffering by copying him, or she is sending him up, as though the whole thing were a game, not to be taken seriously. She does not appear to be malicious, but perhaps somewhat frivolous.

The romantic song being sung by The Bride is punctuated every now and then by the The Man From the Country still singing a comic drunkard's song.

As all this is occurring at the North of the stage The Mother continues weeping at the South, where The Doorkeeper's sister is fussing round her, collecting her tears on the tray.

Scene 20: The Mother weeps out her eyes

The Man From the Country resumes reading:

AND THE MOTHER WEPT STILL MORE AND HER EYES SANK TO THE BOTTOM OF THE LAKE AND BECAME TWO PRECIOUS PEARLS.

Doña Musica pulls off her hair band and points it's two sharp ends at the eyes of The Mother. With a stabbing action she places it over the eyes of The

The-Man-Who continues ripping the veil, looking gruesomely pleased with himself. The Bride rocks in the door-frame behind him as the music reaches a frenzied pitch. Photo: Jan Rüsz.

The-Man-Who bandages his hands with the veil. The Bride stands in the door-frame behind him. The Man From Country begins to sing a drunkards song and The Doorkeeper tells her to be quiet. Photo: Jan Rüsz.

Mother, blindfolding her. The Mother screams and pulls two little wooden hands from beneath the blind-fold, each holding a glass eye. She places these hands holding the glass eyes onto the tray with the picture of the lake. Doña Musica takes the tray round the perimeter of the audience, coyly showing them it's contents, with all the false timidity of a naughty school-girl. As she does this The Mother walks in circles at an increasing speed. The-Man-Who falls backwards into the arms of The Bride, and they form a *pietà* in the door-frame.

Scene 21: The Bride nearly dies for her love

The Man From the Country goes and knocks on the door which is still lying in the centre.

Doña Musica:

BEFORE THE LAW STANDS A DOORKEEPER

The-Man-Who rises out of The Bride's arms and lifts the door-frame onto his shoulders. He carries it a few steps and then gives way under it's weight. He is like a Christ, too weak to carry his own crucifix. They all sing the third verse of *The Seventh*:

IF YOU SEEK YOUR LOVED ONE,

SEVEN WILL PURSUE HER.

ONE GIVES HER HEART FOR WORDS,

ONE PAYS FOR HERSELF,

ONE PLAYS THE DREAMER,

ONE IS ON GUARD UNDER HER SKIRT,

ONE FINGERS HER GARTERS,

The Mother places two miniature wooden hands, holding glass eyes, onto a tray. She is now blind. Doña Musica takes the tray and coyly shows it's contents to the audience .
Photo: Fiora Bemporard.

The-Man-Who falls backwards into the arms of The Bride, and they form a *pietà* in the door-frame.
Photo: Jan Rüsz.

ONE STAMPS ON HER HANDKERCHIEF.

LET THEM HOVER LIKE FLIES AROUND MEAT.

YOU WILL BE THE SEVENTH.

The Bride comes and takes the door-frame from The-Man-Who's shoulders, relieving him of his burden, she carries it to the centre of the space accompanied by slow music. She stops and lets the frame fall to the floor with a crash. As this happens The Man From the Country begins to sing. The Bride lies down in the door-frame, as though it were her coffin, but that mediator of death, The Doorkeeper's Sister, refuses to let her die yet, and gently levers The Bride out of the frame again, with her shovel. The Bride rises and returns to The-Man-Who, who is where she left him. She kneels and sits him on her knee, again in a form of *pietà*, but then, finally, they kiss. She removes the hanky Doña Musica had placed in her bosom and holds it out - her days of sorrow are over, she no longer needs the hanky. Doña Musica, grumbling to herself, comes and collects the hanky. She uses it first to wipe up the puddle of water left by The Mother during the lake scene, and then she wipes The-Man-Who's sweaty brow. She squeezes the hanky and as the drops of water hit the floor all the characters, who had remained motionless during her actions, move to a different position on the stage.

Scene 22: The Man From the Country tries bribery

As Doña Musica speaks the text, she carries out a sequence of actions enacting the scene she is telling of:

The Bride takes the door-frame from The-Man-Who's shoulders, relieving him of his burden. She carries it across the stage, where she lets it crash to the ground. Photo: Rossella Viti.

The-Man-Who sits on The Bride's knee. They kiss. Doña Musica, grumbling to herself, wipes The-Man-Who's sweaty brow.
Photo: Rossella Viti.

THE MAN FROM THE COUNTRY MAKES MANY ATTEMPTS TO BE ADMITTED TO THE LAW

She holds the hanky in front of her so it hangs in a square in front of her face, she peers round the edge of it.

THE MAN SACRIFICES ALL HE HAS HOWEVER VALUABLE, TO BRIBE THE DOORKEEPER

She holds the hanky, pinching it together at the top, with its bottom resting in the palm of the other hand, so that it takes the rounded shape of money bag, she proffers this forwards and drops the hanky to the floor.

THE DOORKEEPER ACCEPTS EVERYTHING BUT ALWAYS WITH THE REMARK: "I AM ONLY TAKING IT TO KEEP YOU FROM THINKING YOU HAVE OMITTED ANYTHING"

She picks up the hanky in a rapid movement and turns her back to the spectators so that the hanky is no longer visible.

Scene 23: Short threads from different stories remain separate

The-Man-Who is now sitting on the door, which is lying flat in the space. He speaks intensely to himself:

SWEAT LINES MY FACE. I CONSTANTLY MAKE .....IN THE EARTH. IF YOU KNOW THE WAY YOU DO NOT NEED EYES.....DEEP IN THE EARTH.

The door-frame is lying flat on the floor. The Man From the Country is sitting at one end and The Doorkeeper is sitting at the other, as though the frame were

a boat. The Doorkeeper rows with his shovel. The Man From the Country steps out of the frame and sings a well known Danish children's song about his favourite colours. Under this song The Mother can be heard crying in Italian:

I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO FIND MY CHILD WHO HAS BEEN STOLEN AWAY BY DEATH.

Doña Musica makes a butterfly from the wet hanky, she shows it to The Mother and throws it away. The Man From the Country picks up the torn Bride's veil and places it over his head. He shakes the little bells that are attached to it so that they ring like a door-bell. The Doorkeeper refuses his latest entreaty:

NOT NOW.

The Sailor accompanies the disconsolate Man From the Country to the South, singing to him as they go.

Scene 24: Discourse on the nature of theatre

The blinded Mother has grabbed the wrist of The-Man-Who, who says:

GO AWAY WOMAN, YOU ARE VIOLATING TIME.

The Doorkeeper puts the door, the door-frame and the carpet in a pile. The-Man-Who lies down on pile. Doña Musica places a head of corn in each of his hands, as though stabbing them through his palms, and says:

WHERE THERE IS SEA THERE WILL BE CORN FIELDS.

She then wedges the scythe The Doorkeeper has had hanging off his belt into the door-frame. The-Man-Who crushes one of the heads of corn against his chest. He then chews the corn and spits it out. He says:

The-Man-Who lies down in the door-frame. Doña Musica places a head of corn in each of his hands, as though stabbing them through his palms. She dances with the scythe before wedging it into the door-frame.

Photo: Jan Rüsz.

I JUST CRUSHED THE CORN. WAS THAT A REAL ACTION, OR WAS IT THEATRICAL FICTION?

The Doorkeeper tells him to SSHHHH! And to distract attention from his awkward question he twangs his shovel at Doña Musica's back-side, who leaps away with a loud OWW!

Scene 25: The guessing game

Doña Musica points to the Doorkeeper's Sister and The Bride. They both run to where the scythe of The Doorkeeper has been wedged in the door-frame. The Sister gets there first and grabs the scythe. The Sister and The Bride stand side by side, their hands behind their backs. Doña Musica plays the guessing game with them. She claps and then points to one of their hands, which they then reveal from behind their backs. She does this twice, but all their hands are empty. The Sister has handed the scythe to The Doorkeeper who is sitting behind her.

Scene 26: The Doorkeeper's Sister kills The Bride

The Bride takes the remaining head of corn from The-Man-Who's hand and holds it up. The Doorkeeper's Sister takes the scythe back from her brother and slashes the corn. The Bride falls to the ground, as though slain. The Sister pulls her limp body onto her back and carries her to the centre. Here she throws her upwards, catches her, lies her on the ground, bites at her as if to rip off her clothing, straddles her, stamps around her, leaps over her, unties and

The Doorkeeper's Sister carries The Bride's limp body. She throws her up, catches her, lies her on the ground, bites at her as if to rip off her clothing, straddles her, stamps around her, leaps over her and unties and strokes her hair.

Photo: Jan Rüsz.

strokes her hair and cradles her. The scene appears to show both necrophilia and the mourning of a dead loved one. As The Sister carries out her actions over The Bride's 'corpse' all the others sing an Italian love song.

Once The Doorkeeper's Sister has finally laid the body of The Bride to rest The Doorkeeper enters and lays his shovel over her body, like the lid of a coffin.

The Man from the Country enters and taps The Doorkeeper on the shoulder and mouths the question "Can I come in now?". The Doorkeeper merely shakes his head. The Man From the Country bows his head, comically desolate.

Scene 27: Raising from the dead

The-Man-Who comes to the dead Bride and sings:

SHALL I CAST IT ON THE SAND
AND TURN IT INTO FRUITFUL LAND?

TALITA KOM

The Bride rises and the lights go out completely. Doña Musica lights a match which The Bride blows out. There is darkness.

Scene 28: The Mother gives her hair away

In the darkness The Man From the Country, who has been circling the door-frame as though looking for a way in, sits and continues the story of The Mother:

WHERE CAN I FIND DEATH, WHO HAS GONE WITH MY LITTLE CHILD?"
"HE HASN'T COME YET", SAID THE OLD WOMAN WHO LOOKED AFTER THE GRAVES AND THE HUGE GREENHOUSE OF DEATH. "WHERE CAN I

FIND MY LITTLE CHILD?" ASKED THE MOTHER. "YOU KNOW, ALL HUMAN BEINGS HAVE THEIR TREE OF LIFE OR THEIR FLOWER, EACH ONE ACCORDING TO THEIR NATURE. THEY LOOK JUST LIKE OTHER PLANTS, BUT THEY HAVE HEARTS THAT BEAT. YOU WILL BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE YOU OWN CHILD'S HEARTBEAT. BUT WHAT WILL YOU GIVE ME FOR TELLING YOU WHAT TO DO NEXT?" "I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO GIVE," ANSWERED THE MOTHER. "YOU CAN GIVE ME YOUR LONG BLACK HAIR," SAID THE OLD WOMAN "AND HAVE MY SNOW WHITE HAIR IN EXCHANGE. "I'LL GLADLY LET YOU HAVE IT." SAID THE MOTHER.

While this text is being spoken the lights have dimmed slightly and The Mother has taken the long grey wig worn by Doña Musica and put it on her own head, thereby taking the old woman's white hair in exchange for her own black hair.

Scene 29:The Doorkeeper's Sister kills The Doorkeeper

The Doorkeeper and his Sister dance flirtatiously with each other. He pulls out a paper-chain of human figures. She slashes this just as she had slashed The Bride's head of corn. He collapses, just as The Bride had. She carries him to the centre, from where she repeats exactly the same sequence of actions

The Doorkeeper's Sister carries The Doorkeeper to the centre. She lays him down, bites at his clothing, straddles him, stamps around him, leaps over him and unties and strokes his hair, just as she had done with The Bride.
Photo: Jan Rüsz.

over his body as she had over The Bride's, cradling him, straddling, him, stamping around him, loosing and caressing his hair.

As she does this the still blind-folded Mother is lead around the stage by Doña Musica and The Man From the Country, singing a Spanish love song. As The Doorkeeper's Sister lays her brother's body to rest the song stops.

Scene 30: The Mother finds her child

The Man From the Country reads:

THE SORROWING MOTHER BENT DOWN OVER ALL THE TINIEST PLANTS AND LISTENED TO THE HUMAN HEARTBEATS INSIDE THEM, UNTIL, AMONG THE MILLIONS, SHE RECOGNIZED THAT OF HER OWN CHILD. "THERE!" SHE CRIED AND STRETCHED OUT HER HANDS OVER A LITTLE BLUE CROCUS.

SUDDENLY THERE WAS A RUSH OF ICE-COLD AIR THROUGH THE PLACE AND THE BLIND MOTHER COULD TELL THAT DEATH HAD COME.

Doña Musica sings in an icy voice.

"HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO FIND YOUR WAY?" ASKED DEATH " GIVE ME BACK MY CHILD!" PLEADED THE MOTHER,

The Mother repeats all her text in Italian.

"THERE, YOU CAN HAVE YOUR EYES BACK," SAID DEATH. "I FISHED THEM UP OUT OF THE LAKE."

The-Man-Who now rips the blind-fold from The Mother's eyes and all sing:

HE IS THE LIGHT IN THE VALLEY

HE IS THE LIGHT OF MY MIND.

The Doorkeeper then gives one child's shoe, cast in silver, to The Bride and the other silver shoe to his Sister. [6] As he does this The Man From the Country continues:

I SHALL NAME TWO FLOWERS: POPPY, FORGET-ME-NOT, AND YOU SHALL SEE THEIR WHOLE FUTURE, THEIR WHOLE HUMAN EXISTENCE." AND THE MOTHER LOOKED DOWN INTO THE WELL AND IT WAS A JOY TO SEE HOW ONE FLOWER BECAME A BLESSING TO THE WORLD, TO SEE HOW MUCH PLEASURE AND HAPPINESS IT SPREAD AROUND AND SHE ALSO SAW THE LIFE OF THE OTHER FLOWER, FULL OF SORROW, WANT AND WRETCHEDNESS.

The Mother circles the door-frame, which lies flat on the floor. She stares down into it as though staring into a well.

"WHICH OF THEM IS THE FLOWER OF MISERY AND WHICH THE FLOWER OF HAPPINESS?" SHE ASKED.

"I CANNOT TELL YOU THAT," REPLIED DEATH, "BUT THIS YOU SHALL HEAR; ONE OF THESE FLOWERS WAS YOUR OWN CHILD." THEN THE MOTHER SHRIEKED IN TERROR. "WHICH OF THEM WAS MY CHILD? TELL ME THAT."

The Mother runs and snatches the two shoes from The Bride and The Doorkeeper's Sister, she clutches them to her chest and then holds them out in her open palms. She then hands them to The Doorkeeper who holds them like a baby.

"SAVE MY CHILD FROM ALL THAT WRETCHEDNESS!" "I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU," SAID DEATH. "DO YOU WANT YOUR CHILD BACK, OR SHALL I CARRY IT YOU KNOW NOT WHERE?" THE MOTHER WRUNG

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6 It is a Danish tradition to have a child's first pair of shoes cast in silver, once the child has grown out of them.

HER HANDS, FELL ON HER KNEES AND PRAYED, "DON'T LISTEN TO ME!

DON'T LISTEN TO ME!"

The mother shouts in Italian:

"DON'T LISTEN TO ME! DON'T LISTEN TO ME!"

and runs laughing, wringing her hands.

AND DEATH WENT AWAY WITH HER CHILD INTO THE UNKNOWN LAND.

The Mother falls to the ground. She has given up. Doña Musica begins singing in English about the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. As she sings she hands a head of corn each to The Doorkeeper and The Bride and then finally she hands the scythe to The Doorkeepers' Sister. Doña Musica is becoming gradually more malevolent. Now that she has lost her grey locks to The Mother she has stopped being wide eyed and naive. No longer an innocent observer of events, she is becoming actively destructive.

Scene 31: The Doorkeeper's Sister kills the dead

The Doorkeeper's Sister slashes both heads of corn and as she does so The Bride and Doorkeeper fall to the floor. She recomences the same sequence of actions, cradling, biting, jumping over and straddling, that she has already performed over these two individually, but this time she does it to the two bodies in unison. As she does this all the characters sing an Italian love song. The song stops as The Sister finally lays their bodies to rest, placing that of The Bride on top of The Doorkeeper's, they look like a slightly odd Romeo and Juliet.

The Mother, who now has the old woman's white hair, abandons her child to Death shouting: 'Don't listen to me! Don't listen to me!' and runs off laughing wildly.
Photo: Jan Rüsz.

The Mother falls to the ground. She has given up her child and has nothing left to fight for.

Photo: Jan Rüsz.

Scene 32: The eruption of chaos

Doña Musica has knotted all her lace hankies together and created a sail for the door-frame, which she and The Man From the Country now sit in, as though it were a boat.

The Sailor runs into the space playing at full volume and singing the fourth verse of *The Seventh*:

IF YOU CAN AFFORD TO WRITE VERSES,

SEVEN POETS WILL GO TO WORK.

ONE BUILDS A CITY OF MARBLE,

ONE IS BORN IN DEEP SLEEP,

ONE CALLS THE WORD BY NAME,

ONE MEASURES THE HEAVENS AND NODS,

ONE GAMBLES AWAY HIS SOUL,

ONE DISSECTS A LIVE RAT;

FOUR SCIENTISTS AND TWO BOLD WARRIORS.

YOU WILL BE THE SEVENTH.

As he sings and plays The Sailor rushes past the spectators, barely missing their knees. The Mother circles in the space laughing and singing. The Doorkeeper strangles The Bride, dragging her body around the space. His Sister stamps on the floor, shouting. The-Man-Who wanders around chewing and spitting out corn. He dons The Bride's fallen halo, stands on the benches and starts talking loudly to the spectators. He then carries the door-frame to the South where he lies it flat on the floor. Doña Musica and The Man From

Doña Musica has knotted all her hankies into a sail. She and The Man From the Country now sail in the door-frame as though it were a boat. The-Man-Who stands on the benches speaking loudly but intimately to the spectators. Photo: Fiora Bemporard.

the Country play with the door and then carry it to the South and put it onto the frame. As they shut the door the music ends and The Man From the Country falls, limp, onto the door. The Mother takes off the long grey wig and places it on the head of The Man From the Country. All sit at the North except for Doña Musica and The Man From the Country, who stay by the door, at the South. The Man From the Country is laying with his head resting on it, Doña Musica stands besides him. She picks up the book from which The Man From the Country has been reading *The story of a Mother* during the whole performance, and pulls out a smaller book. She then sits down on the door.

Scene 33: The death of The Man From the Country

Doña Musica reads:

DURING THESE MANY YEARS THE MAN FIXES HIS ATTENTION ALMOST CONTINUOUSLY ON THE DOORKEEPER.

HE CURSES HIS BAD LUCK

IN HIS EARLY YEARS BOLDLY AND LOUDLY

LATER, AS HE GROWS OLD, HE ONLY GRUMBLES TO HIMSELF

HE BECOMES CHILDISH

NOW HE HAS NOT VERY LONG TO LIVE

The Man From the Country speaks in the voice of a dying person:

EVERYONE STRIVES TO REACH THE LAW, HOW CAN IT BE THAT I AM THE ONLY ONE IN ALL THESE YEARS TO HAVE BEGGED ADMITTANCE?

Doña Musica replies:

NO ONE ELSE COULD EVER BE ADMITTED HERE SINCE THE DOOR WAS MADE ONLY FOR YOU. I AM NOW GOING TO SHUT IT.

Doña Musica then places her little book back inside the book of The Man From the Country. She then places this back where it came from, inside the larger book screwed to the door.

Scene 34: Another discourse on the nature of theatre

The-ManWho is sitting on The Doorkeeper's knee. He takes out his pocket watch, it chimes. He says: TIME'S UP NOW.

He and The Doorkeeper walk, arm in arm, talking.

The-Man-Who asks: BUT TELL ME, WHO IS THE PROTAGONIST OF THIS PERFORMANCE?

The Doorkeeper replies: THE ONE WHO DIES AT THE END.

The-Man-Who asks: IS THIS THEATRE?

And The Doorkeeper replies: YES, THIS IS THEATRE - A THREAD MADE OF MISCHIEF AND GUILE. THE CHARACTER DIES AND THE ACTOR RETURNS TO LIFE.

As they arrive at the door The-Man-Who remains standing, fluttering. The Doorkeeper takes the wig from The Man From the Country and gives it back to Doña Musica. The Sailor begins the final verse of *The Seventh*:

AND WHEN EVERYTHING WRITTEN IS DONE,

SEVEN WILL GO TOGETHER TO THE GRAVE.

ONE WAS CRADLED BY A BURSTING BOSOM,

ONE REACHES FOR A FIRM BREAST,

The-Man-Who sits on The Doorkeeper's knee and places his pocket-watch on the shovel, it chimes. He says: 'Time's up'.

Photo: Jan Rüsz.

The-Man-Who and The Doorkeeper walk together. The Doorkeeper explains: 'This is theatre - a thread made of mischief and guile. The character dies and the actor returns to life.' Photo: Jan Rüsz.

ONE THROWS AWAY THE EMPTY GOBLET,

ONE INCITES THE POOR TO VICTORY,

ONE WORKS AS THOUGH POSSESSED,

ONE ONLY STARES AT THE MOON.

YOU WILL WALK UNDER THE TOMBSTONE OF THE WORLD.

YOU WILL BE THE SEVENTH

Scene 35: The undressing

As The Sailor sings, Doña Musica undresses The-Man-Who and redresses him with a white skirt and a white bandage round his chest. He dances in a state of tortured ecstasy. The Mother, The Bride and The Doorkeeper's Sister stand opposite him wailing and forming different tableaux depicting grief. It is as though they are witnessing his death, as he is metamorphosed into a strange looking angel. Gradually they and The Sailor also undress, revealing modern day clothing beneath their old-fashioned costumes. When they drop their costumes they also drop their characters. The Doorkeeper shovels up their old clothes and puts them into the open door way, which is still lying on the floor. He is burying the past. Once he has collected all their clothes he closes the door and stands on it. Doña Musica fixes the scythe to the The Doorkeeper's shovel, she pulls The-Man-Who's last bit of former clothing off, which is a bow-tie. She makes this flutter as she had done with the hanky-butterflies. She fixes this 'butterfly' to the scythe and sets it alight. As she does this Roberta (who had been playing The Mother), now in a red suede mini-skirt, black stockings and carrying a whip comes and kisses The-Man-Who

Doña Musica has divested The-Man-Who of his suit and dressed him in a white skirt, with a white bandage round his chest. He is like a grotesque nativity angel. He dances on the carpet in tortured ecstasy.

Photo: Jan Rüsz.

voraciously, she then leaves him again. He had responded passionately to her embrace, and now grimaces in anguish as she abandons him. The Doorkeeper begins a dance on the door as he carries his shovel with the burning bow-tie. Doña Musica says, then sings, a gospel about The Flood. The others join in:

CAN'T YOU SEE THE CLOUDS GATHERING

DON'T LET IT BE - STAY TO LATE

THERE'S A BRAND NEW FEELING IN THE AIR

BETTER RUN, IN THE ARK, BEFORE THE RAIN STARTS

ITS GONNA RAIN, COME ON IN THIS ARK

COME ON, FOLLOW ME, ITS GONNA RAIN.

As they sing, they stamp rhythmically around the stage. Isabel (The Doorkeeper's Sister) has two metal bars for beating out the rhythm and Tina (The Bride) cracks a leather belt. Kai (The Sailor) still has his accordion. The-Man-Who jumps into The Doorkeeper's arms and they all exit, singing and stamping.

Only Doña Musica and The Man From the Country are left on stage, they are now sitting next to each other on one of the benches behind the door. They do not move, there is silence. Doña Musica picks up a bunch of corn bound by a black ribbon. She opens the door and kneels into the doorway. The Man From the Country helps her lay corn along the edges of the door-frame. As she works Doña Musica sings:

YOU CAME TO MY DOOR AND KNOCKED.

I ASKED WHO IS IT?

YOU ANSWERED, IT IS ME.

Roberta has taken off the costume of The Mother to reveal what she has been wearing underneath: a red suede mini-skirt, a black lacy top and black stockings. She comes and kisses The-Man-Who voraciously, and then leaves him again.
Photo: Rossella Viti.

The group wearing modern clothes are like a street gang. They exit singing and stamping. The-Man-Who jumps into the arms of The Doorkeeper.
Photo: Jan Rüsz.

AND THE DOOR WAS NOT OPENED.

TIME WENT BY, YOU RETURNED AND KNOCKED AT MY DOOR.

I ASKED, WHO IS IT?

YOU ANSWERED, IT IS ME.

AND THE DOOR REMAINED CLOSED.

MORE TIME WENT BY AND AGAIN YOU KNOCKED AT MY DOOR.

I ASKED, WHO IS IT?

YOU ANSWERED, IT IS YOU.

AND THE DOOR WAS OPENED.

As she finishes the song she also finishes laying the corn and closes the door. The corn stands up all along its rim. The Man From the Country laughs like a young girl and The Disinherited Son of the Devil, who has spent the whole performance behind the Southern screen, now enters and stands behind the door. He has a mask of corn. He plays a gentle, pastoral tune on his violin. Doña Musica and The Man From the Country embrace. Then Doña Musica turns a hanky into the butterfly and makes it fly. She chases The Man From the Country, who is like a child wanting to catch a butterfly. Doña Musica stops and holds the butterfly up high. The Man From the Country stretches up to it but cannot reach, he gives up and hangs his head. Doña Musica unties the butterfly so that it becomes a hanky again, and offers it to The Man From the Country to wipe his face with. They exit together with The Disinherited Son of the Devil. Just as they leave the stage there is a crashing sound from behind the Northern screen as the others resume the song about The Flood. They rush on stage, singing more violently and loudly than before. They stamp over the door trampling the corn, and exit again, shouting the song. Only one of them remains,

The Disinherited Son of the Devil enters wearing a mask of corn. He stands behind the door, which has corn standing along its rim. He plays a gentle, pastoral tune on his violin.
Photo: Rossella Viti.

Doña Musica turns a hanky into a butterfly and chases The Man From the Country with it. They are like two young girls playing in a summer field.
Photo: Jan Rüsz.

ose now wearing modern clothes rush back on stage, singing more violently and loudly than before. They mp over the door, trampling the corn, and exit shouting the song. Photo: Tony D'Urso.

alone in the dimming light. It is Roberta. She looks around at the spectators, then walks out. The stage is now empty and the light comes up slightly on the door, revealing the crushed corn, the burnt out butterfly and the door which is still closed.

Only one actor remains, alone in the dimming light. It is Roberta. She looks around at the spectators, then walks out. Photo: Jan Rüsz.

CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF ODIN TEATRET

> It's only what you do not understand that you can come to a conclusion about. - Peter Høeg [1]

My initial intention in writing this thesis was to extract and define principles of practice, as found in the work of Odin Teatret, in order that these principles might be used by others. Having, thus far, extracted and defined principles that relate to the making of performance, the question of how others might use them remains. In other words, having defined certain aspects of the legacy of Odin Teatret, it is now necessary to ask how others can inherit this legacy. In conclusion I will therefore ask: what is a legacy? What use can other practitioners make of Odin Teatret's legacy? What legacy have Odin Teatret left themselves?

What is a Legacy?

Shomit Mitter, in his book *Systems of Rehearsal* contends that Brook; 'does not have a distinctive legacy to hand down to future generations, a consolidated bequest that can outlast the impermanent incandescence of each of his productions independently.'[2] Brook has, nevertheless, undoubtedly influenced many Western, twentieth century theatre practitioners. This, therefore, raises the question of what it means to leave a legacy. Perhaps it is not contingent, contrary to what Mitter seems to imply, on having created a highly individual, watertight code of practice. Perhaps a legacy needs to be an *inspiration*, just as much as a source of *information*.

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1 Peter Høeg, *Miss Smilla's Feeling For Snow* (London: Flamingo,1994), p.410.

2 Shomit Mitter, *Systems of Rehearsal* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.3-4.

Torgeir once explained that when making films about Odin Teatret's work, his task was not so much to *teach* as to *inspire*. Many of the Odin films are therefore not about *how* they make theatre, but *why* they make theatre. Barba says; 'It is as though every day you must try to discover what theatre means for you. What is the meaning of Odin Teatret?' [3]

Brook also cites *why* as one of the most important things for a director to understand. He writes; 'The director needs only one conception - which he must find in life, not in art - which comes from asking himself what an act of theatre is doing in the world, why it is there.' [4] *Why* make theatre is ultimately, however, a question each artist must answer for him/herself. It is only aspects of *how* to make theatre that can be inherited.

In order to define the legacy of an artist or group of artists, it is necessary to divide the transmissible aspects of their work from the purely individual aspects of their work. The transmissible aspects are what may be used by others, despite different circumstances, personalities, capabilities, visions and taste. These aspects may be said to constitute the craft of the director, and it is this craft, based on transmissible principles, that this thesis has been concerned with. However, even craft is more complex than it may seem. 'Craft' means power, artistic skill, magic and, of course, a boat.[5] Craft, therefore, lies at the basis of the whole journey of making a performance, from launch, to arrival at a final destination. Barba writes:

> It is easy to make the word 'craft' banal: as if it were associated solely with 'technique' and 'routine'. But craft means something quite different: the patient building up of our own physical, mental, intellectual, and emotional relationship with texts and spectators, without conforming to those balanced and proved relationships current at the centre of theatre. This means devising performances

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3 *On the Way Through Theatre*, directed by Erik Exe Christoffersen.

4 Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point* (London: Methuen,1987), p.6.

5 As defined in the Oxford English Dictionary.

> which can do without traditional audiences, and which can invent their own spectators. It means knowing how to look for money without embodying those values favoured (for economic, ideological, or cultural reasons) by those who invest resources in the development of the theatre.
>
> All this is most exclusively craft: the technique of the actor, of the director, dramaturgy, administrative skill. Only in very small part is it idealism and spirit of revolt. To invent one's own meaning, in fact, signifies above all knowing how to seek the means to find it. [6]

It is because of this that Taviani writes; 'Barba rejects the image of the director as a simple specialist in mise-en-scène. For him the director is a leader before he is an 'artist'. [7] All the facets that make up the figure of the 'leader' are essential to Barba's work as a director and are part of what have enabled Barba to stimulate and challenge not only a constant flow of new people, but also the same people over a long period of time.

Before looking at *what* it is possible to inherit from Barba and the Odin, it is, however, relevant to look at *how* one should inherit. Grotowski explains that it is fundamental to understand *how* to learn from the work of others, *how* to inherit. He says:

> Not so long ago someone asked me: 'Do you want the Center of Grotowski to continue after you disappear?' I responded 'no' simply because I responded to the intention of the question; it seemed to me the intention was 'Do you want to create a System which stops at the point your research stopped, and that then becomes taught?' To this I responded 'no'. But I must acknowledge that if the intention had been: 'Do you want that this tradition, which in a certain place and a certain time you have reopened (...) that someone continue it?', I would not be able to respond with the word 'no'. [8]

From Grotowski we therefore understand that a legacy should not be a book of rules, to be inviolably maintained. It should not be a *preservation*, but a *continuation*. The

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6 Eugenio Barba, 'Third Theatre: a Legacy From Us To Ourselves' *NTQ*, vol. VIII, n.29, (February 1992), p.9.

7 Ferdinando Taviani, 'What Happens at an ISTA Session?', Rina Skeel, ed., *The Tradition of ISTA* (Londrina: FILO,1994), p.23.

8 Thomas Richards, *At Work With Grotowski On Physical Actions* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.133.

responsibility for a legacy therefore resides, not only with those who leave it, but also with those who inherit it. The creative interpretation of a legacy is what makes it valuable.

Inheriting the Legacy of Odin Teatret

In the introduction of this thesis I say that the Odin Teatret's 'members draw influences from different cultures and historical moments to form what Barba calls their "professional identity"'. At the end of the thesis it is time to turn this statement on its head and see how others, myself included, might construct a 'professional identity' based on an accumulation of principles from, amongst others, Odin Teatret.

In looking at the principles of practice, shown in this thesis, the most important question that remains is: 'What, if any, are the specific circumstances under which these principles are usable?' This is a field of study that there has not been time to look at here, but that could very usefully follow on from the research in this thesis. Without having fully investigated the issue, it is, however, possible to give an indication here of the circumstances which, if not essential, at least greatly enhance the use of these principles:

The actor training

The training is where the actors learn and work with the various pre-expressive principles relating to the development of their own scenic presence. These are the principles of opposition, balance, and differing energies and directions in the space, as listed in the chapter 'Dramaturgical Techniques'. These greatly enhance the actors' ability to create strong and varied material. They are also what allow the actors to

operate within the pre-expressive level of the dramaturgy, before knowing who their characters are or what the performance is about. The training is essential to an actor wishing to work in accordance with the Odin Teatret principles.

What is less clear is the extent to which the director needs to be involved in the actor training in order to be able to work on, and with, the actors, and not just on the mise-en-scène of the performance. How detailed and intimate does the director's knowledge of the work of the performer need to be? With reference to this issue, Brigitte Cirla, a French performer, defines two different aspects of the director's identity. She says:

> For me there are two kinds of directors. You have directors who, as we say in French, are 'metteur-en-scène'. That is, directors who 'put on stage' something that is already there. They are the person who, from outside, puts things together and is an external eye. They see the rhythm of the whole performance, its different dynamics, its different peak moments and levels, the stage relationships, the space, things like that. This is what I define as a 'metteur-en-scène'. If this person also knows how to help an actor and how to develop the work of the actor organically, then they are what the Americans call a 'coach'. If the director is a 'metteur-en-scène' I am already satisfied, but if s/he is also a 'coach', then that is wonderful, but that combination is very rare. If the director is only a 'metteur-en-scène' and not a 'coach', then I just have to manage, even if sometimes it is difficult, it can be interesting. But if the director is only a 'coach', and has no vision of the performance, it is terrible for the actor. It is dangerous for the actor, because even though you feel more secure because you are given special attention, you are in fact very lost, because the surrounding structure is not solid enough. [9]

With reference to Barba, this division between 'coach' and 'metteur-en-scène' may seem purely academic, for he is both a 'metteur-en-scène' and a 'coach'. Indeed his mise-en-scène grows directly out of his work with the actors, and, therefore, of his work as 'coach'. The scenic visions and solutions appear through the actors, not around them, as they are the scenic centre in performance as well as the central source of creativity in rehearsals. However, this distinction between 'coach' and 'metteur-en-scène' is

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9 A paraphrase from an interview with Brigitte Cirla on the video *In Transit - Hidden Directions: from the Transit Festival at Odin Teatret (1992)*, made byVagn Groth and Leo Sykes.

interesting for those who would seek to borrow from Barba's way of directing because it brings to light certain assumptions that can be made about the role of director and exposes the contents of this all-encompassing title. The question that remains is whether a director can fulfil the role of 'coach' without working with the actors on their training. The training is, after all, where the director learns much about the work of the actor. It is where s/he gets to see the different actors' problems, clichés, potentials and strengths. The training is also a meeting point for the actors and director, without the intermediary of a performance.

Though Barba has not participated in the actor training for years, he can only afford to do this because he made such a strong pedagogic investment earlier. It is important not to forget the context of Barba's current working practice, and recognize that a similar investment is *probably* required by anyone chosing to take up his legacy.

Long rehearsal periods

The Odin Teatret rehearsals often seem to last about one year, but I do not think that a 'mean-time' can be established on the basis of this as each process is unique, and also because rehearsal lengths are not only determined by the performance, but by many external issues such as tour dates, etc.. Certainly, however, the length of rehearsal time is an important issue. Both Grotowski and Brook discuss it in their latest writings. Grotowski asks:

> What is the proper length of time for rehearsals?
>
> It depends. Stanislavski often rehearsed for one year and it even happened to him to work on the same play for three years. Brecht also rehearsed for long periods. But there does exist something like a medium duration. During the 1960s in Poland, for example, the normal period of rehearsal was three months. For young directors who are preparing their first or second performance, it can be advantageous to have before them a set date for the opening, using a relatively brief

> period to rehearse, for example two and a half months. Otherwise they can indulge themselves in a waste of time. [10]

Grotowski here dispels the myth that the longer the rehearsal period, the better it is. This is no doubt salutary advice to the young practitioner who might seek to copy those with more experience and insist on prolonged rehearsals. Brook also warns of the over-indulgence that long rehearsal periods can lead to. He writes:

> When two actors play together in a rehearsal, without an audience, there is the temptation for them to believe that theirs is the only relationship that exists. They can be trapped into falling in love with the pleasure of a two-way exchange, forgetting that a three-way exchange is what it's all about. Too much time in rehearsal can end by destroying the unique possibility which the third element brings. The moment we feel that a third person is watching, the conditions of a rehearsal are always transformed. [11]

On the other hand, Brook draws an important differentiation between rehearsals that use a pre-written play-text, and rehearsals in which everything is to be devised:

> However, when one works from a theme that has no apparent form or structure, it is essential to give oneself unlimited time. The advantage of an existing play is that the author has already completed all his work, so it is possible to determine how long the staging needs to take and thus fix the date for the first performance. In fact, this is the only difference between an experimental project and putting on an existing play. Both actions need to be equally experimental, only the time that is needed differs: in one case, a programme for a theatre can be announced, in the other case, dates must be left open. [12]

Because the rehearsals at Odin Teatret are a process of discovery, where everything is to be created, with nothing decided beforehand and because the quality of the finished performance is dependent on every detail being elaborated and fixed, time is an essential factor.

It is, however, interesting to note that leaving the dates totally open can also cause the work on performance to go on indeterminately. There will always be new ideas to try out and details that need adjusting. Something that even began to happen

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10 *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*, p.116

11 Peter Brook, *There are no Secrets* (London: Methuen,1993), p.14.

12 *There are no Secrets*, p.101.

for myself, at the very end of the process of *Kaosmos*, was that I became dissatisfied with large aspects of the performance, such as the whole seating arrangement for the spectators. When I started making these kinds of remarks Barba told me; 'You are getting bored, so things have stopped functioning for you.' It is true that I no longer had any kind of objectivity with regards the work. From my point of view, though I did not know it at the time, it was definitely time to show the work publicly, so that I might gain a fresh perspective, through the eyes of the spectators. The date of the premier of *Kaosmos* was set earlier than most of the actors seemed to be comfortable with, but there comes a moment when, even though a performance might not be entirely ready, it needs to meet its spectators in order to develop further. Fixing an opening date is also a way of obliging the director to bring the process to some kind of conclusion, that could risk remaining in an interminably indefinite future.

Long term collaboration

The fact that the colleagues of Odin Teatret have been collaborating for many years allows for in-depth research and the creation of a deep and trusting relationship between the actors and director. This relationship of trust is particularly important to a process such as that of *Kaosmos*, in which chaos was the main ingredient. The ability of Barba to employ sea-sickness as a creative tactic relies heavily on the trust of the actors in following him into the storm. Long term collaboration also leads to a shared understanding of basic principles which allows the rehearsal to progress without the need for many explanations.

Another important aspect of long term collaboration is the time it allows for research and replenishment of creativity. Grotowski writes; 'This is the key reason

why companies are needed. They provide the possibility of renewing artistic discoveries.'[13]

Indeed, the fact of being a well-established theatre company, rather than a temporary group of freelancers, is the source of the Odin actor training, long term collaboration, long rehearsal periods and shared understanding of the principles of practice. Ironically, perhaps, it is the fact of being a company that allows the actors and directors to operate with a degree of independence and relative isolation, that would be very difficult to sustain in a less stable situation.

Given, however, that the heyday of group theatre now appears to be over, it remains to be seen how a freelance environment might make use of Odin Teatret as a model. Those who would seek to take Odin Teatret as a model for their own working practice would need to select those aspects of Odin's work that would function within the proposed new context. In other words, the principles of the Odin are probably most safely used within a specific set of circumstances, also drawn from Odin Teatret, but perhaps it is possible to extract the principles and employ them in entirely different circumstances. The risk is that they will thus become a mere travesty of their original selves, but there is also the possibility that they might inform and even provoke a new medium and situation, for example in work with a play-text, or even film.

The transition from stage to screen can be a logical step for many directors, as was demonstrated at the recent British Film Day, run as part of the London Film Festival 1995. On a panel of four directors, three came from a theatre background. They all said that theatre had been an excellent training ground for work in film because a) it taught them to work with actors, and b) it taught them to work with a

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13 *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*, p.117.

play-text/script and to respect the intentions of the writer. My immediate reaction was that a) at the Odin I had to learnt to work with actors, but in a very specific way, using improvisations, never working 'naturalistically' or on character in the traditional sense. I wondered how I would help an actor to do 'normal' things, like just walk down a street. And b) I had not learnt how to work with a play-text/script. We had used text as words, but not text as narrative structure or plot. I was not even sure if it was really my job to respect the intentions of the writer. It was with great interest then that I read Mike Leigh's (the British film director) account of how he works, starting with nothing, no script, no story, but discovering the whole film through improvising with the actors. A possible mode of transition between the two environments became visible.

The employment of the Odin's principles of practice in the medium of film could create an interesting pattern of cyclical evolution of principles of practice. Montage, for example, was a practice explored in theatre by Meyerhold, developed in film by Eisenstein and taken back into theatre by Barba, via, amongst others, Eisenstein. My interest in exploring the use of the Odin's approach to montage in the medium of film therefore belongs to a long history of cross-fertilization between the two medium. However, the very limited experience I have had in attempting to use some of the Odin principles in working with video, has taught me that some of the principles cannot be transferred wholesale. Despite the fact that Barba's use of montage in the construction of performance is greatly inspired by the grammar of film, film and theatre are nevertheless different languages. What can look organic and coherent in theatre can look disturbing on film, like a mistake. I do not yet know whether this was because my habits as a television viewer would not allow me to

accept an unusual cutting sequence, or if it was because I had not managed to adapt the principles in a way that functioned in this new medium.

An issue that concerns the use of the principles of the Odin in film is how film might use simultaneous montage. This is a fundamental issue in terms of translating the practice of the Odin into film, as simultaneous montage is so central to the way in which Barba crafts his performances. The apparently simple difference between a screen, which can be taken in from a single perspective, and a traverse stage, which cannot, dictates a different relationship with the spectators and a different way of structuring the material.

This issue has been addressed in a variety of ways by film-makers. Some, in particular those working in television and therefore having access to the technology offered by video, have worked with a split-screen, in order to create a variety of simultaneously occurring images. However, because of the current size of the television screen this kind of montage does not usually work with reference to the meaning and narrative. The various simultaneous images become so small as to be unrecognizable, their assembly therefore creating patterns of colours and movements, rather than juxtapositions of aspects of narrative, mood or rhythm.

Moving on from the possibility of borrowing specific principles from Odin Teatret, there is the more general effect that they, as a thirty year-old theatre company, have had on theatre practitioners around the world. This effect is probably most visible in the work of various groups and individuals in South America and Italy, where the Odin have toured and taught prodigiously over the years. It is difficult to say, however, exactly what effect the Odin's way of working has had on the theatre in general because the successful 'inheritors' take what serves them and transform the

influence, thereby rendering it less specifically recognizable. Grotowski describes how subtle an influence can be:

> It is obvious that if in the course of our work (...) we have met with almost sixty groups - sixty companies of 'young theatre' and theatre research - there might have appeared a certain influence so delicate that it's *practically anonymous*, at the level of technical details, of details of craft - regarding precision, for example - and this is legitimate. [14]

Another difficulty in pin-pointing an influence is that it is often difficult to recognize the specific source. What is taken from Barba may have been taken from Grotowski and in turn this may have been taken from Stanislavski etc.. An area in which the Odin can, however, be seen to have been specifically influential is in a way of working that is termed 'feminine' directing.

'Feminine' directing

This way of working has been developed by many different practitioners, in many different ways. One specific, though diverse, group of practitioners to explore this new role of the director are the members of The Magdalena Project (an international project for women in theatre). They have coined the term 'feminine' directing to define a way of working in which the roles of the actor and director have been somewhat redefined. 'Feminine' directing, as I understand and use the term is, above all, a way of working in which the material itself decides the performance. It implies a kind of directing that is as concerned with being led as with leading. With 'feminine' directing the director has gone from giving birth to the performance, his/her brain-child, to, in the words of Barba, being its 'midwife'. This demands a great ability in the director not only to observe the work in its essence and details, but also to know how

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14 *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*, p.132-133.

to help or oppose it in the right way, and at the right moment, in order to cause it to grow. This mode of working is by no means specific to Odin Teatret, but is rather something the Odin, and others, such as Brook, Grotowski and Robert Wilson have developed. Brook writes:

> Experience shows again and again that decisions taken by a director and a designer before rehearsals start are invariably inferior to decisions taken much later in the process. By then, the director and designer are no longer alone with their personal vision and aesthetics, but are nourished by the infinitely deeper vision, both of the play and of its theatrical possibilities, that comes from the rich, interweaving explorations of a whole group of imaginative and creative individuals. [15]

And of Robert Wilson it is written:

> People sometimes imagine that Wilson's creations play in his head like films which have only to be transferred to the stage but, in fact, they are very much created in the theatre. Like a choreographer, he needs to see something in space before him in order to move forward; he must have people around him to flesh out his mental scenario (which may be vague in the beginning) and help clarify his vision while it is evolving. [16]

This mode of working has been espoused by many practitioners and is the basic ethos of devised theatre. What distinguishes 'feminine directing' from some other forms of devised theatre is that it does not negate the role of the director, or employ him/her merely as an outside eye. It is therefore a way of working that has, on the one hand, accepted the traditional role of the director as the one who takes ultimate responsibility for the form of the performance. On the other hand, it is a way of working that places great creative responsibility on the actor.

In 1991 Julia Varley and myself hosted the 'Transit Festival' for women directors, at Odin Teatret, in collaboration with The Magdalena Project. In an article about the festival I wrote:

> The festival was not concerned with establishing an exclusively woman's way of directing, but with attempting to perceive a new way of working that redefines the

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15 *There Are No Secrets*, p.104.

16 Laurence Shyer, *Robert Wilson and his Collaborators* (New York: Theatre Communications Group,1981), p.XIII.

> role of the director (...) What is 'feminine' directing? For myself, some of the points that emerged were: not to predetermine the work, but rather to follow the process and see what it tells you, not what you want to say with it (...) an actor-director collaboration with a ping-pong dynamic, so that each builds on the proposal of the other. [17]

The influence of Odin Teatret, amongst others, is highly visible here.

As a working ethos and artistic methodology feminine directing may seem to indicate a form of passive directing. But it actually requires a form of bravery. To dare to follow the material and to acknowledge that it has a life that is not necessarily controlled or understood by the actors and director, takes courage. This courage, in order to be valid, must, however, be an *informed courage*. If the director is not skilful enough, then the performance risks remaining at the level of chaotic chaos, never achieving a state of organized chaos. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, Barba warned me that it could be dangerous for me to observe a way of working that began with so few reference points. It seems that Barba was warning against the temptation of leaping into the waves, without first learning how to swim. Therefore, to become a genuine and able feminine director it is essential to have a craft. This would seem to imply that, in taking Barba as a model, one should first take his principles of practice - and only once these have been understood and assimilated - should one wade out of one's depth and begin to experiment with his methodology of sea-sickness. This methodology of sea-sickness rests at the base of feminine directing.

The dangers of an inheritance

For those who do seek to take Odin Teatret as their model, there are sometimes problems of misconception and misinterpretation.

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17 Leo Sykes, 'Transit Festival at Odin', *NTQ* Vol IX, no.36, (November 1993), p.391.

Barba transforms his role of director as interpreter into the role of director as *auteur* by not generally using a play-text. This role places many more demands, not only on the director, but also on the actors. The risks involved become ever greater as the tasks and necessary skills of the actors and director expand. Barba's role as *auteur* is made all the more difficult and risky by the fact that not only does he generally come to rehearsals without a play-text, but he also comes without many pre-conceived ideas about the performance. For those who would seek to borrow from his process, there are many traps. The problems with this way of working, and the reason many brave experiments fail, is that it assumes the director is also a playwright, able to craft language as well as dramatic situations, and plot. It also assumes that an actor is repeatedly going to be able to produce non-repetitive material, that will create more interesting and varied characters than those found in play-texts.

There are groups (often quite young) who have followed the Odin's working principles to the letter, but without really understanding them and who, as a result, create banal, formalistic performances which are so concerned with being 'artistically correct' that they forget that the only real rule in theatre is to be interesting to watch. I know that my own tendencies used to be to create 'artistically correct' performances in which I applied principles and techniques without really understanding *why* I was using them, to what end and effect. I would take, for example, the principle of 'do not illustrate the text' to such an extreme that only abstract nonsense resulted. I therefore discovered, through the making of my own work, that the principles do not provide a recipe.

Taken individually, the various principles (relating to the actors' actions, use of text, work with props etc.) are transmissible, just as the pre-expressive principles of the performer are. Barba writes:

> At this pre-expressive level, the principles are the same for all, even though they nurture the enormous differences which exist between one tradition and another, one actor and another. They are analogous principles because they are born of similar physical conditions in different contexts. [18]

It is, however, difficult to use, expand on, or deviate from these principles, unless one really understands them. I have not come to a single conclusive definition or conception of these principles. However, one of their shared aims is to make the performance interesting to watch through being unpredictable and unusual. In the film *On the Way Through Theatre* Barba speaks of his days as a a young student. He says:

> I invited girl students to the theatre. It was more chic than taking them to the cinema. But it was terribly boring. What does one do when one gets bored? One starts to fantasize and to dream, open-eyed. I used to think: 'But why don't the actors do the opposite of what we, the spectators, are expecting. Instead of shouting why don't they scream silently, kiss those they hate and mistreat those they love' (...) This is the vision on which Odin Teatret is based: to go beyond what is obvious and predictable in the course of events (...) To surprise the spectators and ourselves.

This does not necessarily mean that the performance has to be clever, funny, tragic, shocking etc., it just means that the aim of the principles is to play on the expectations and engage the sensibilities of the audience, in such a way as to avoid them becoming bored or disengaged. It sounds so simple, but it is fundamental, for as Brook says; '*le diable c'est l'ennui.*' [19]

The principles found in the Odin's work, and listed throughout this thesis, are therefore transmissible, but must be employed with discretion and understanding. And understanding, ironically, can lead to a breaking with the rules. Once you understand

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18 Eugenio Barba, 'Cultural identity and Professional Identity', *The Tradition of ISTA*, p.10-11.

19 Peter Brook, *Le Diable c'est l'Ennui* (Paris: Actes Sud,1991).

why you are doing something, it becomes easier to see when it is not working. So rather than just applying these principles blindly, you gain the freedom of using them, but also of rejecting and adapting them in the moment that they are not appropriate. In this sense principles are not sacrosanct. Rather they are a very healthy starting point. As Andrey Tarkovsky, the Russian film director, wrote; 'Of course you have to know (...) all the rules of your profession; but artistic creation begins at the point where these rules are bent or broken.' [20]

Artistic creation cannot, therefore, stop at the copying of a great master. Rules, principles and techniques must be borrowed, begged and stolen not with the aim of emulation or simulation, but as the first steps in the process of a personal artistic evolution. However, masters whom one can copy, at least to begin with, are a fundamental part of artistic evolution. Barba once explained why it is important to have a master:

> For many years I had no identity. I blindly followed Grotowski, even at a distance. Not his way of speaking to the actors, or of guiding them, but his way of protecting them. This may be dangerous. Yet without consciously running this risk, without trust, one cannot awaken one's own potential.
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> It is only in working for others that one can go beyond one's own limits. It is not possible to transcend oneself so long as one is working just for oneself or for one's own ideas. [21]

Eugenio Barba is my professional master. This, to me, means that he is much more than my teacher. The day I realized that I trusted him more than I trusted my own instincts and desires was the day I felt that he was my master. I trusted him to know how to guide me and to know what I needed to learn. Having always been impatient and done things my own way, as well as always having had an aversion to any form of authority, I found it an odd sensation to voluntarily relinquish the understanding of my

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20 Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (London: Faber and Faber,1986), p.166.

21 *'What happens at an ISTA Session?'*, p.24.

situation to someone else's better judgement. It is hard to define what it means to have a master, except perhaps through negation. To have a master does not mean that I feel subjugated or controlled by him. It means that I feel totally honoured to have this person, in fact persons, as all the actors of Odin Teatret are in some ways my masters, in my life. They are more than guides and teachers for, they somehow hold a mirror up to my reality, reflecting back to me the truth of what I am doing. Through their eyes I can ascertain the value of my actions and my work. This does not mean that they are my judges. I have not given anything of myself up or changed myself for them. They have given me strength, a vision, and, above all, a challenge. I do not share all of their aesthetics and tastes, but I do recognize the value, not only of their principles of practice, but also of their ethics. It is they who have taught me that 'whatever you do, do it with your whole self.'

I recently directed my first performance since the making of *Kaosmos*. It was a children's performance made with a young Italian company, Teatro Sfera di Om. We had the premiere at Odin Teatret. I thought I would be terrified to present my work to the members of the Odin. I thought that this would be my trial-by-fire as a director. This would be the terrible moment of truth in which we would all find out whether their investment in me, of time, energy, money and faith had been worth it. In other words, could I direct? I was to discover that my trust of Barba was total, when he, the theatre practitioner I most admire, could watch my work, and I did not feel judged, just supported and even relieved at his presence.

Odin Teatret's Legacy to Itself

Barba writes:

> Louis Jouvet once made an observation which has the echo of an enigma: 'There is a legacy from us to ourselves.' From this, a number of fundamental questions follow: 'Is the legacy which I constructed still in my hands? Can I still recognize its value, or has it been tarnished by the passage of time, by the practice of the trade?[22]

And in the Film *On The Way Through Theatre* he says:

> If we don't understand that a thread guides us backwards towards that which is essential in ourselves, then we are living in a present in which we cannot put down roots (...) To remember means not to lose your dream. The flame has gone, yet the ashes remain. We must protect them. For this reason it is important not to forget that in our youth there existed something that was essential for us. We must not let ourselves be tamed by cynicism and pragmatism.

While reaching backwards, towards 'that which is essential', the Odin is, however, also reaching forwards, to that which is always evolving. This is what keeps them creatively alive. The Odin's older generation of actors: Torgeir, Iben, Roberta and Julia, are Barba's core collaborators and because they are his professional equals, they give him a huge freedom. With this freedom new obstacles have presented themselves. No longer does Barba have to only think of making the actors function for the performance, but of making the performance function for the actors. He has to manage to interest and challenge them as much as they must him.

This need for new challenges has manifested itself in their recent research work, in which they have been using a play-text. Barba asked Iben, Roberta and Julia to work on the basis of the first scene of Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*. He gave the actors no indications as to how they should work, so that their only reference point was the text itself. This caused much consternation amongst them. Eventually, however, they managed to proceed through an absolute adherence to the text. The initial result of their work looked like something of a pastiche on 'naturalism'.

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22 'The Third Theatre: A Legacy From Us to Ourselves', p.3.

This was not an investigation into how Stanislavski, for example, might have worked on the text, it was a borrowing of a certain 'look': the aesthetic trappings of naturalism. They spoke the text with 'normal' voices (versions of their own private voices) and followed the logics and meanings of the text. Their actions were based purely on the stage instructions in the text and they sat and walked and talked only as Chekhov instructed. They wore elegant, old-fashioned evening dresses and used the props listed in the text, even though whatever was at hand was used to denote these props, for example, a plastic lunch box played the part of a bird-cage. This was one example of how, although they were playing with the trappings of the 'naturalistic' aesthetic, they ignored the demands of the proscenium arch stage and the realistic set, therefore usurping the text's apparent demands for the recreation of a specific fictive reality. This, as Brook points out, is truer to Chekhov's original intentions. Brook writes:

> When Chekhov describes an interior or an exterior in great detail, what he is really saying is: ' I want it to look real'. After his death, a new form of theatre - the open arena stage - came into existence, one which Chekhov had never known. Since then many productions have demonstrated that the three-dimensional, cinematic relationships of the actors with minimal props and furniture on an empty stage seems infinitely more real, in a Chekhovian sense, that the cluttered picture sets of the proscenium theatre. [23]

The play-text was, in reality, used as a basis for a highly defined group improvisation. This improvisation was difficult to fix, partly because it was so long and partly because it lacked detail as the actors enacted prescribed actions rather than discovered and invented their own actions. The actors were in many ways struggling with the impossible task of 'acting normal', or of 'acting themselves'. This caused them to become somewhat self-conscious and vulnerable. This vulnerability was an aspect

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23 *There Are No Secrets*, p.52.

of being faced with a task they in some ways felt ill-equipped to deal with. Barba was still managing to challenge even his most long term colleagues, as the actors were obliged to seek new ways of reacting to this unusual situation. The material they created was not in itself particularly interesting. What was interesting was to see how the actors attempted to develop new strategies of survival in an unfamiliar situation. These strategies became integrated into the actors' material. For example, in order to decide who should play which of the sisters, Iben, Roberta and Julia had sat in a circle and spun a bottle. This bottle-spinning has become one of the 'scenes' in their material.

Parallel to the work on *The Three Sisters*, the younger and less experienced actors were working on another scenario called *The Flintstones* (because some large stones were used). They worked in what could be called a more 'typically Odin' way. They made improvisations which they fixed and which Barba then montaged together. They also worked with song and music.

The challenge for Barba will lie in the combination of the material of *The Three Sisters* and *The Flintstones*. This will be a challenge because, although montage of unrelated material is the basis of most Odin performances, this time the material is not only thematically or physically unrelated, it is also aesthetically unrelated. The two different groups have made material that, apparently at least, is from two different theatrical genres: devised theatre and text-based theatre. Arguably a montage of different genres is what Barba created in *The Million*, in which all the actors used traditional dance forms from different performative genres, from Capoera to Kathakali. It is also what he does during the Theatrum Mundi, the performances made at each ISTA session, in which he combines the material of performers from many different performative traditions into a single spectacle. But he seems to be digging at

something else with this particular line of enquiry. Not only does *The Three Sisters* introduce a new genre, or at least aesthetic, it also introduces a play-text and characters that have certain specified narratives. The question is, will he employ only the words of the text or will he also use its dramatic, narrative structure and definition of character? And, if so, how will this structure be interacted with the non-narrative structure of *The Flintstones*? The situation is apparently similar to that of *Kaosmos*, in which pre-written narrative texts are interacted with devised non-narrative material, in order to create something that lies beyond both of the original sources. But this situation is different because the text is a play-text, intended to exist not as a literary story, but as an enacted narrative. Patrice Pavis confronts this issue in Barba's work. He writes; 'there is (...) a danger, which neither Barba nor Grotowski escape, of limiting narrative to logos, instead of seeing narrative as a structural principle.' [24] In the work on *The Three Sisters* the stage instructions have dictated the staging of the scene. This indicates that the text will be given some kind of a structural presence, even if it is not what would normally be understood by a narrative structure.

Much contemporary theatre is exploring the potential of multi-media performances. Barba seems to be doing something that is equivalent, but opposite. He is exploring the multi-theatrical potential of performance. Barba appears to be plundering the depth and breadth of theatre in search of meetings across and between genres. It is the meeting, more than the genres themselves, that appear to fascinate him. It is as though his enquiry through ISTA, into the common basis of the work of the performer, now has a parallel in the work of the director: the shared dramaturgical basis of different performance genres.

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24 Patrice Pavis, 'Dancing with Faust - A Semiotician's Reflections on Barba's Intercultural Mise-en-Scene', *TDR* T123, (Fall 1989), p.48.

As for the future of Odin Teatret, their *aktivitestskalendar* indicates that they will be busy with tours, ISTA sessions and many other activities up until 1998. By 1996 the calendar will probably show bookings through into the next millenium. What their near future holds is, therefore, already partly defined. To look further into the future would be pure supposition. Perhaps *Kaosmos* will be the last performance to include all the present members of the group. Perhaps, more significantly, it will be the last performance to include all the older actors. Barba asks; 'For how many years will these people, who began as eighteen year-olds and are now in their forties and fifties, remain alive as artists?' [25] And the question I have arrived at, at the end of this thesis, is how will the work, generated and developed by the Odin, remain alive, even once the members of the Odin have themselves ceased working? But there are no immediate answers to these questions, because what Janne Risum writes of *Kaosmos*, is equally true of Odin Teatret:

> There is no conclusion to this reverberating story. [26]

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25 *On The Way Through Theatre*.

26 Janne Risum, 'Kaosmos' (unpublished text, Denmark,1993), p.15.

APPENDIX A

Odin Teatret's Members

The internal structure of Odin Teatret is divided into two groups. The acting group, which includes Barba and anyone else who is involved in the creative process, and the administrative group. The acting group travels many months of the year, while the administrative group, except for the tour leader, remains at the base in Holstebro, looking after the daily running of the theatre.

The acting group:

Eugenio Barba - Italian. Founder and director of Odin Teatret and of ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology). He has directed all Odin Teatret performances since it began in 1964.

Kai Bredholdt - Danish. Musician/actor. Kai originally trained as a boat maker and carpenter. He joined Odin Teatret as a carpenter and then began working as an actor-musician in 1990.

Roberta Carreri - Italian. Roberta visited Odin Teatret in 1974 as part of her university research, she never finished university, but has remained as an actor in the company ever since. She runs the twice yearly 'Odin Week' which introduces participants to the work of the Odin. She also runs more long term workshops in Holstebro.

Jan Ferslev - Danish. Jan has been working as a rock musician since the age of sixteen. He then worked in theatre, and eventually with Odin Teatret. He has been a collaborator of Odin Teatret since 1975 and a permanent member since 1988.

Else Marie Laukvik - Norwegian. One of the founding actors of Odin Teatret, she was also director of Teatret Marquez in Århus for ten years. Else Marie now works on her own projects but still occasionally collaborates with the Odin.

Iben Nagel Rasmussen - Danish. Iben joined the company on its arrival in Denmark in 1966. She is an actor and very involved with pedagogic activities. She set up her own group, Farfa in 1980 which operated until 1990. Today Iben is responsible for the training of the younger actors Kai, Tina and Isabel and she runs a month long workshop each year called *Vindenes Bro* (*The Bridge of Wind*). Iben has also written and published a book.

Tina Nielsen - Danish. Tina joined Odin Teatret in 1991. She has recently moved to Italy, but continues to collaborate in different productions and projects of Odin Teatret. Tina is the only Odin actor to have been to drama school.

Isabel Ubeda Puccini - Spanish. Isabel came to the Odin as Roberta's student. She then took over the role of another actor who left the performance *Talabot*. She has remained at the Odin ever since. She often works with young people and children.

Julia Varley - British. Julia joined the company in 1975. She is an actor, but also very involved in the administration of Odin's tours and events. Julia is also one of the international advisors for The Magdalena Project, a Wales based network for women in theatre and has directed two performance of Pumpehaus Theatre in Germany.

Torgeir Wethal - Norwegian. Torgeir is a founding actor of Odin Teatret. Torgeir is also a film-maker and has directed many of the films and videos of Odin Teatret's performances and activities.

Frans Winther - Danish. Frans is primarily a composer/musician. He is a freelancer based in Copenhagen but is involved in all the projects and activities of the Odin.

Two people who collaborated as trainee/assistant directors on *Kaosmos* are Lluis Masgrau and Leo Sykes (myself).

Lluis Masgrau - Catalonian (Spanish). Lluis is a theatre scholar. He came originally to observe the work on *Kaosmos* for one month and has ended up staying at the Odin, where he now works as an archivist.

Leo Sykes - British. Leo has been following the work of Odin Teatret as a trainee director since 1991. Assistant director on *Klubauterfolket* and *Kaosmos*. Assistant artistic director of Transit Festival for women directors, held at Odin Teatret. Associate director of Teatro Sfera di Om, who are based near Odin Teatret in Denmark.

Pia Sanderhoff - Danish. Pia is a costume maker. She also helps out with the various aspects of running the theatre.

Poul Østergaard - Was the technician and set builder of *Kaosmos*. He has now left Odin Teatret.

In this thesis all are refered to by their first names, except Barba. This is because even his closest friends and collaborators usually refer to him as Barba when writing about his work. I therefore consider it only appropriate that I should do the same. It is not in any way intended to indicate some kind of hierarchical positioning. However, in the sections that are extracts of my diary I have called him Eugenio, as this is what we actually call him in the work, and I did not want to change the content of my diary or the image of the work situation.

The administrative group:

Louise Aalborg - Assistant book keeper.

Patricia Alves - Tour leader.

Lars Oppegaard - Technician.

Sigrid Post - The book-keeper.

Pushparajah Sinnathamby - Caretaker.

Ulrik Skeel - Organizes The Festive Week, events, PR.

Rina Skeel - Barba's administrator, helping with everything from the organizing of ISTA to the publishing of books.

Jens Højmark Sylvestersen - General assistant.

Odin Teatret's Productions

Odin Teatret is most renowned for its studio productions which involve either the whole group, or most of the group. Since the mid 1980s however a new kind of production has also been evolved by the women of the group - chamber pieces. These are either solo performances or with only two to three actors. These chamber pieces are toured alongside the group performances, which continue to be made. Many of the actors have also created work demonstrations in which they expose the hidden techniques of their craft. The Odin also makes street performances, these can be anything from a clown show to a street parade. Other performances are made as part of 'special projects', such as the Theatrum Mundi performances made as ISTA, or the performances made during the Holstebro Festive Weeks. Following is a chronological list of all the productions of Odin Teatret, except for those made as part of 'special projects':

Past street performances

The Book of Dances - premiere1974, Carpignano, Italy.

Anabasis - premiere1977, Bacelona, Spain.

The Million - premiere 1978, Århus, Denmark. (played both indoors and outdoors)

Street parades

Odin Teatret often makes street parades in the countries it is visiting. Each actor has a fixed, masked character. Some of the characters have been passed down through the generations.

Past studio productions

Ornitofilene (*The Bird Lovers*) - premiere 1965.

Kaspariana - premiere 1967.

Ferai - premiere 1969.

Min Fars Hus (*My Father's House*) - premiere 1972.

Come And The Day Will Be Ours! - premiere 1976.

Brecht's Ashes - premiere 1980.

Oxyrhincus Evangeliet (*The Gospel According to Oxyrhincus)* - premiere 1985.

Talabot - premiere 1988.

Memoria - premiere 1989.

Current studio productions

Judith - premiere 1987.

A solo performance by Roberta Carreri about the biblical heroine Judith.

The Castle of Holstebro - premiere 1990.

A solo performance by Julia Varley about a young woman and her admirer, a tall, elegantly dressed skeleton.

Itsi Bitsi - premiere 1990.

A performance by Iben Nagel Rasmussen, with the actor-musicians Jan Ferslev and Kai Bredholt, about her encounters with drugs and politics in the 60s and her relationship with Eik, a famous Danish song-writer.

Kaosmos - premiere 1993.

The group performance premiered in 1993 using the texts of Hans Christian Andersen and Kafka with choral singing.

Fathers and Sons - premiere 1993.

A musical revue of traditional Danish songs and poems. With Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Jan Ferslev, Tina Nielsen, Frans Winther and Kai Bredholt.

The Ugly, The Mean and The Very Stupid - premiere 1995.

A clown performance with Tina Nielsen, Kai Bredhot and Isabel Ubeda Puccini, directed by Iben Nagel Rasmussen.

Work demonstrations

As part of their pedagogic activities Odin Teatret have made work demonstrations about their training and work on performance. These take the form of a performance, each lasting about an hour. Each demonstration is personal to the actor who made it (always with the direction of Barba), but reveals and explains the techniques that could also be used by other actors. These techniques are hidden by many other layers in performance, but are its backbone. As Roberta Carreri says in her work demonstration: 'Technique is like the black railings, in performance these must be hidden beneath the soft white snow.' [1]

Traces In The Snow - with Roberta Carreri. An account of the different training phases of the Odin Teatret actor, as a group and as an individual. Roberta also shows material created during the training and how this can be used to make a scene for a performance.

The Echo Of Silence - with Julia Varley. A description of different types of voice training and of ways of working with voice in performance. In particular it focuses on the combination of voice, text and action.

The Dead Brother - with Julia Varley. About the collaboration of the actor and director in the creation and elaboration of material for performance. Julia shows how the action and text can be elaborated and then put together by the director so as to create a scene.

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1 Traces In The Snow.

The Paths Of Thought - with Torgeir Wethal. About improvisation. Here Torgeir exposes the usually hidden mental world of the actor during an improvisation. He also shows different types of improvisation it is possible for the actor to use. Torgeir shows some improvised actions and then demonstrates how these actions can be elaborated and adapted to be used for a scene.

The Inner Way, The Outer Way - with Tina Nielsen. Here Tina shows how she works on character, first according to the methods she learnt at the state drama school in Odense, whereby she works on the pyschological make up of the character. Then she shows how she has learnt to work at the Odin, with the character being built up through vocal and physical actions.

Other activities

Odin Teatret has its own publishing house and parallel to his work as director Barba has always been a strong exponent and writer of theatre theory and history. Barba has written many books, both on the work of Odin Teatret and on the research of ISTA. Behind this output of texts lies Barba's preoccupation with pedagogy, but also his belief that the director must be an intellectual.

Odin Teatret also has its own film production company, run by Torgeir Wethal, which produces films and videos on the work of Odin Teatret. The group is also involved in many other activities, such as the biennial Festive Week in Holstebro, in which the whole town, together with theatre groups from outside, puts on a week of events.

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Films and Videos

On the Way Through Theatre, director: Erik Exe Christoffersen.

In Transit - Hidden Directions: from the Transit Festival at Odin Teatret (1992), made by Vagn Groth and Leo Sykes.

Talks, Conferences and Workshops

Director's Workshop, 1990, Cardiff, hosted by The Centre for Performance Research.

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ISTA, Londrina, 1994.

'Transit Festival for Women Directors' hosted at Odin Teatret in November 1992 by Julia Varley and Leo Sykes. Held in collaboration with The Magdalena Project.

'The British Film Day', held by The London Film Festival 1995 and The Director's Guild of Great Britain.

Based on the MHRA Style Book.

APPENDIX TO:
DIRECTING THROUGH MONTAGE: A CHRONOLOGICAL LOOK AT THE CONSTRUCTION OF PERFORMANCE THROUGH THE CREATION AND COMBINATION OF ITS VARIOUS ELEMENTS.

Interview by Leo Sykes with Eugenio Barba. Copenhagen, May 1996.

L.S. How genuine was the sea-sickness? Did you for example refrain from telling us which texts or characters were to be used in order to allow the process to be more chaotic?

E.B. No. Although I may have withheld certain elements as they would only have confused the actors if I had given them to them in that moment. I didn't tell them things that belonged to a very distant perspective, which they could not even imagine as they had not gone through certain phases which would enable them to understand what this was about. For me it was the same. I didn't know what it was about, but for a director there can be a sudden sort of flash from far away in the performance which has a kind of autonomous self-sufficiency. But if it happens to an actor, for example you tell them, "now we are going to make a scene where a girl dances with a green flag" they will get confused.

L.S. But did those become reference points that orientated you in the chaos. Were there orientation points?

E.B. You can call them orientation points, you can call them inspired points, you can call them a sort of very stimulating magnetic knot. Very often there is a peak you find, just like the image of the book frozen in ice, you came with it, it was very strong, then very slowly it melted away, but for a certain period of time it was like a temperature. I would say that such an idea is like temperature, the temperature starts melting the ice. The ice is all the usual ways of looking and seeing and judging the things around us, approaching them. This idea is like a temperature which causes this to melt, and it melts until something appears from within the ice. Sometimes the idea or image or poem or song or scene or play or detail of a prop, is very strong, but nevertheless only has a very short life, or it can have a very, very strong life.

But you were asking how genuine the sea-sickness was. It was genuine, I myself was entangled in a sort of labyrinth. It is one thing to build the experience of the labyrinth, of going towards the East until you reach a limit at which point you have to turn back. To not go straight to the centre, the objective, but rather make the challenge, the searching, the mapping, be the central part of the process of discovery. But I only knew who the characters were after Christmas. On holiday I worked very hard in order to solve this problem which I had given myself: when I come back in January, each actor must have a name. At the time I felt this was the biggest weakness in the working process.

L.S. At the very beginning of the process, once the actors had made and fixed their first improvisations, you fixed them into a sequence. A few days later you changed this sequence and this new montage has remained as the basic skeleton of the finished

performance. What was the difference between these two montages, and how were you able to tell which functioned already at such an early stage in the process?

E.B. It was very, very clear. The first montage was something we had never done before. Usually the actors do an improvisation, which they learn and fix. They keep these scores as they are until the moment when we start putting the scores into relation to each other and then we build the scene in relation to the performance. But the first montage was completely different because what I did was decide to make each improvisation into a small performance, by itself. So as soon as I found a song or a prop to add, then the idea was that this improvisation should become an autonomous performance lasting five minutes, which functioned in its own right. And many of them did function.

L.S. But you made two different montages and the only difference was the order in which you placed the individual scenes. I never understood why the second montage occurred.

E.B. When you create a montage you have the possibility of building a certain horizon, or taking a certain route, which opens into a field, and from this field you know well what the consequences of taking a certain direction will be, and maybe it would not be so clever to take this direction for many, many reasons. Some directions are clear; "Ah ha, if I go in this direction then I will strengthen certain mannerisms in my or the actors' way of working". Or you meet certain themes, that of course always return in our work. By themes I mean very, very pregnant ideas, the black holes

around which all my thoughts gravitate. Then you have to try not to go directly to these black holes. Therefore you have to change the direction, even if you know that in the end you will gravitate towards these holes. So these are some of the reasons why we suddenly changed the montage. Also because the montage is one of the ways of trying to dilate the possibilities of new meanings and ways of seeing, of discovering new relations. Discovery is not to do with discovering something new, discovery is to do with discovering new relations, to bring to light the new relations, this is what suddenly totally changes the way in which you see and judge things. For example, a new relation enables us to see, on the same two-dimensional canvas, both *en face* and the profile of the picture. This is what the cubists did, they changed the relations of things, before you either saw *en face* or you saw the profile, so they have completely changed our way of approaching reproduction or the attempt to be as true as possible to the complexity of life when reproducing it on canvas.

L.S. Do you have premeditated images, or scenes in your head that you then want to use in the performance? And if so how do you then go about it?

E.B. Very often I have a image, but never a scene in its entirety, with all the details. I can have an image which I like. The whole performance on Brecht began with the image of Brecht who met the Chinese actor, Mei Lang Fang who gave demonstrations in his hotel room, and then Brecht went back to Germany and tried to indicate what he had seen in this hotel room to some German actors. This was the image that fascinated me from a theatrical point of view. I wanted to know how we could do this: a Norwegian or Danish actor performing a Chinese actor becoming Brecht's

German actor. This was very complicated, very technical. I mean we had to solve the problem technically. When I say technically I mean with a degree of skill on the part of the actor that enables him to become almost like a shaman, like a magician or sorcerer who transforms himself to such a point that the laws or limits of materiality are transcended, disappear, so that what ones sees is really Ariel dancing. Very often I have the impression that my actors are no longer made of bone and flesh, they are very, very light, they are like dancing fire-flies, and at the same time like mountains, like rocks, very, very powerful. Very often this image is a question, on the one hand, of how to make them as consistent and as powerful as a natural event and at the same time as immaterial as a dancing fire.

L.S. But if you have an image in your mind's eye, that you want to recreate on the stage, does it then transform once you try to make it?

E.B. Once you try to recreate an image there are so many difficulties that it no longer functions and then it becomes banal, very often you realize at once that even if you work for three years, you will never make this image fly. Sometimes this isn't true, sometimes you find a different way and then you continue. But how and why it functions depends on the circumstances, the actor, my mood, but there are no rules for this, I can't give any rules.

L.S. What are the essential ingredients for you in beginning work on a performance?

E.B. It is a strong sensation, a strong awareness, of something that is moving very, very deep down. Sometimes I am able to throw an image onto this motion inside me. Then I can say "Ah ha, this is the story of an intellectual travelling around the world, in exile, fighting against violence, escaping from violence. He wants to defend certain ideals and is trying to keep his tool of creation, his language, as pure as possible". I am speaking about Brecht, yet in reality I am speaking about something else. I am speaking about how to be consistent towards certain visions, the visions you had when you were young, how to move within the new circumstances you face in your life, remaining loyal to what has characterised a certain purity, your actions, thoughts. How to be in a time without belonging to that time. But all this is very abstract, but these ideas have the possibility of finding certain images or anecdotes. Anecdotes are very important.

L.S. So you don't need to have a specific theme in order to begin work?

E.B. As soon as you are able to say this is the story of an intellectual, then comes Brecht, and then that is a theme. Or, when you say that this world has been following false messiahs, and then you find that there have been false messiahs like Sabbatei Zevi in the sixteenth century, then you already have the skeleton of *Oxyrhincus*, on top of which you can add other stories in order to create a denser narrative universe. What happened with *Kaosmos* was that there were these deep motions, movements within me; the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin wall, and most of all, what was happening in Yugoslavia. But there was also a different issue. The first country I had been to, when I started travelling when I was very, very young,

seventeen years old, was Norway. There I was 'adopted' by some young people, a little older than myself, who had been fighting as partisans in the war against the Nazis. They were communists. Their first task had been to go to Yugoslavia to build a road. So Yugoslavia has always for me been a place connected with themes of solidarity, of sacrifice but at the same time a consciousness. Then I started to travel there with the theatre group, we have played almost all our performances there. So I have a very strong emotional relation to it. All this is what brought me to speak about something that looked as though it was there, but wasn't. Like a palace that is outside your window, then one day you open your window and you see that piece by piece the building is falling, first one wing, then another then two floors and you can't understand or stop this crumbling. But at the same time I didn't want to speak about it because Sarajevo becomes a sort of cliche, everybody is talking about it, so I was fed up with it, I knew I couldn't use this. It would have been a sort of sentimental terrorism or emotional blackmail. So this was one of the great problems I had, as on the one hand I was very clear in what I wanted to talk about. When you, at the beginning came with the theme of the refugee ghost of communism, for me this was an extraordinary possibility, it created the possibility of gravitating around this theme. I remember that the image was not only the ghost of communism, but also all the mothers of the victims, so all this created many complimentary opposing forces. So all the things were there from the beginning. Then we moved onto the *Jungle Book*, at first I had thought this would just be a way of creating material for use in a children's performance, but then my sub-text, my theme, turned out to be identical to the first one, and I expressed this many times during rehearsals. Only the subtext remained the same for me but the text, that which appeared, was very different for the actors. The

greatest difference between this performance and all the others we have made was that the actors did not know who they were, what sort of story they were telling and even when I told them that they were villagers who were performing, this was not very inspiring for them, and I can understand that this was not very inspiring.

L.S. Do you think that it is possible to train as a director, and what are the essential things that one could learn from a master?

E.B. Speaking from personal experience I trained as a director by spending one year at drama school in Warsaw and then following the work of Grotowski for three years. Then I began directing myself. Of course there are certain things that you can learn, firstly what you learn when you follow someone is how this person finds solutions to a lot of situations and how they create a pattern. Human beings are animals and every human being learns by imitation. Even those directors who do not have a master, or who start making theatre without having been to a school or having seen how another director works, have nevertheless certain ideas about how to work, or they imagine how a director works. So the fact that you have certain models is of great help because then you start working and you just copy, because you saw it done and know that it functions. On the other hand, if it didn't function then you don't do it in the same way because you know that it didn't function, so you will try to find another way. And in this way the model helps you to find your personal way. So this is the first and greatest positive thing. The fact of studying the practice of other directors gives a certain reference point which gives you the possibility of finding your own way.

Secondly, there are also certain objective problems that exist in our profession, for example, you are working with an actor who has problems with his voice, so how should you solve this? Either you solve it yourself, or, as many great directors do, you have specialists who come from outside to help. We know for example that Bob Wilson and others have specialists who come and work with the actors. They are *metteurs en scene*, they are extraordinary directors of the visual, they put together, create the atmosphere, the dramaturgical wholeness, but when it comes to the work on details they call on other specialists. So one has to know whether one is this type of director or not, and if you are, then you have to rely on others.

L.S. Do you think that someone could use you as their model as a director, use your way of working, if they are not the kind of director who works intimately on the actor?

E.B. They would not do it as my way presupposes a deep insight into how to build organicity on stage. This has to do with professional problems like how to build presence on stage, this is connected with the training and how you have trained your own actors. Remember that all the Odin actors have been trained by me or by people who are attached to this vision of how an actor should be. They are not just people coming from outside.

L.S. So do you think you could work with actors that you did not train?

E.B. Yes, I work with the ISTA performers. The fundamental thing is whether the actors are able to repeat their material or not. This is the most important thing. If they

are able to repeat in such a way as to enable us to immediately find a common, shared territory which is the objective result of what they are doing, at the vocal or physical/ dynamic level, then I can indicate the details and then I can work with them.

But apart from the work with the actors you have to be able to solve certain things like the work with the lights, the relation to the audience, how to direct the attention of the spectator, what does it mean, for example, to let the spectator dominate the scene, or to do the opposite, and not allow the spectator to dominate or be always aware of all that happens? These are things that you learn. There are certain things, just like in medicine, that can be learnt. Medicine is not a science, everyone who studies it can learn how to diagnose certain things, but we all know that there are doctors who are ten times better at diagnosis than others. So there are certain things that you can learn as a director, but the way in which you use them afterwards is very different, will give different results to each individual director.

L.S. Do you as a director have an equivalent to the actors' daily training?

E.B. No, I always used to say that the director's training is reading and not only reading about his or her own profession, although s/he should know a lot about his his/her profession, but also reading about related fields. Reading helps us, but I don't know, I am actually just mentioning what gives me pleasure and then I think that this pleasure or this necessity is also an objective criteria for a director.

L.S. So books are a very big source of renewal and information for you?

E.B. We don't know how books live in us. They are not only information, they are not just functional or pragmatic.

L.S. I meant more like inspiration then.

E.B. I don't know, but I know that, for instance, I am still living on the interest of the investment I made in certain books when I was young, Dostoevsky, for example. Today these books are still there, I don't know if they are still inspiring the productions. If somebody said that *Kaosmos* was inspired by Dostoevsky I would say "Yes, you are right" and yet at the same time I would say "No, you are not right" because it has not been a conscious influence. But reading nourishes thought and of course when you eat your porridge, spaghetti or roast beef, you don't know how much of it is going to give you strength, power and patience for the work with the actors. It is the same when you are reading, you don't know in reality. There is a very beautiful image by the Brazilian poet Osvaldo de Andrade, he says that human beings are cannibals. When it comes to culture you have to go and eat other things, and when you eat you also defecate, but certain things also remain, and this transforms into your metabolism. You can't go around saying "Oh, he's inspired by the steak he ate three months ago, or by Yorkshire pudding he ate two weeks ago", it is completely transformed in your metabolism, and it's the same with reading. Of course you never have a pure or innocent gaze. You look and try to see and find out, involuntarily perhaps, what can be useful for you. Maybe you have to give a conference tomorrow and so you are looking for an image that can help you to start or end your lecture, or you can see something that you can tell your actors or use in your performance. But

this is because we think simultaneously on many different levels. I am speaking to you and at the same time there is a part of my mind that is thinking of what I will say in half an hour at the press conference, another part of my brain is thinking about the *Theatrum Mundi* rehearsals that begin tomorrow, and I'm looking at the birds flying outside the window, I'm looking at you, at the three hotel staff who came and disturbed us, all these things are processed by different parts of me, so I accept that I am many, I am not only one. Just now I am concentrating on being as clear as possible in answering your questions, but at the same time I am aware that there are other things that exist and which I try to help, even though I cannot verbalize how they are functioning, but I know they will be expressed or interfering in other important aspects of my life in the course of the day.

L.S. When you work on a performance do you make a distinction between working on what is good for the performance and working on what may be pedagogically good for the actor?

E.B. For younger actors yes. Even if they are doing something which is not good for the performance I let them continue because it can be a good training, experience or journey for them and then I can change it. But not with the older actors, as they already have so much experience that it is just a waste of time. With them it's almost the opposite, you have to give them the possibility of immediately discovering small holes that oblige them to make an effort in order to expand these holes so that they might pass through them. So there are very different techniques for working with the young actors and the actors with whom I have been working for more than twenty

years. There are also actors with whom it is better not to work at all because they know much better how to solve their problems alone. Jan is a typical example. If I were to work with Jan he would have problems, whereas if I leave him to work alone he finds excellent solutions.

L.S. Why is it more exciting to always work with the same people, rather than always new ones?

E.B. For me discovery means to reveal, uncover what is behind the known. To uncover new relations which are there but which no one has ever thought of. There is a relation between the moon and the tides. This is a real discovery. This relation has always been there, but its discovery enables us to suddenly start looking at the moon and water in a new ways. So working with the same people means that first of all everyone is trained in the same way of climbing. You can really describe making a performance as a sort of sport. For me it is mountain climbing, and then you must train actors to this sort of pace, of rhythm, of individual responsibility. Each step is important, therefore you have to pay attention to the details. The actors must be trained in this way, so they understand that each step is a question of life or death. This sounds very rhetorical, but you know what fundamentalists we are when it comes to details in our work. A mountain climber knows that each step can carry me three centimetres higher or it can make me fall if I stand on a loose rock. And it's not only me who falls, but I take all the others, who are tied to me, down too. This is the other important aspect: how to be in as much solitude as possible in the work, fighting with your own demons, limits, wishes, ambitions, blindness, so you are alone, and at the

same time you know that this loneliness or solitude can only be transcended if you are aware of and respond to the slightest impulse from the others. So you need special people to make this kind of adventure. Making a performance is an adventure, it is like going to the South Pole, you don't just take anybody. You have to train people who can live and spend months, literally months in rather ungenerous working conditions.

L.S. So you work with specialist actors and musicians, but why don't you work with specialist set designers or lighting designers, for example?

E.B. In the beginning it was for financial reasons, we could not afford to. But now very often it is because the problems we face cannot be solved by a set designer, for instance a set designer will know certain things about the materials of the set, but we also need a set that can be easily packed and transported and that doesn't weigh too much. We want to keep a room or space, so that people come and see that this is a space, not a theatre. There should not be an illusion.

L.S. But in *Oxyrhincus* you had a set that did create a world for the performance.

E.B. This was a typical situation where there is a stage design, or architect's view, which completely transforms the work. But it was hell for the actors, who took thirty-six hours to build the set up each time. But our very history is such that we are a guerilla group, very mobile and very flexible, able to arrive and build up the set in one day and able to even perform the same day. These are very particular conditions.

This does not mean that tomorrow we cannot use a stage designer or lighting specialists.

L.S. But is it exciting to meet these other specialists?

E.B. Yes, it has been a great pleasure to meet Jan de Neergaard [a Danish Set Designer] in *Theatrum Mundi*. Whenever you meet a specialist who gets involved and is committed to the collaboration it is a great pleasure, especially those who are open and feel that the best collaboration consists in giving and taking, since I work in this way, and this is what we did with Jan de Neergaard and therefore it has been a great, great pleasure.

L.S. What, apart from the time scale, are the fundamental differences for you in making an Odin performance and making the *Theatrum Mundi*?

E.B. Time is the biggest difference and this changes everything completely because if I had the actors of the *Theatrum Mundi* for three or five months the performance would achieve a completely different complexity and would tell many more stories than it does now.

L.S. But in terms of your approach as a director, are you basically doing the same thing in the two situations?

E.B. It seems that I am. Let's say that it is like a surgeon operating. There are surgeons operating in Sarajevo, in Bosnia, without much equipment, then there are surgeons operating in the best private clinics in Britain or Denmark. The conditions are completely different. I mean when I work on an Odin performance I have everything I need and what I need is space, time, peace, silence and people who are as patient as I am. In *Theatrum Mundi* I don't have this, it's like an emergency, a person arrives and then you have to operate immediately with just a kitchen knife. So *Theatrum Mundi* works with very simple tools, little time, and a lack of means, by which I mean lights or technical things. But nevertheless I always operate with the same skill as a good surgeon, I have the same skills in both situations.

L.S. Your generation of theatre-maker has created what is called the 'experimental theatre', but you also know the traditional theatre very well because this is what you grew up with it, seeing it. My generation has grown up seeing experimental theatre and really knows very little about how to work with play-texts, or naturalism, or any of these elements that your generation has rejected but nevertheless knew about. Do you think that my generation of theatre-maker has to go back and learn some things from the traditional theatre? For example, one very often sees young groups who don't know how to work with text.

E.B. The lack is rather that of teachers. The young groups have no models to refer to so they imagine certain things. Besides a lot of the theatre today called 'visual theatre' or 'performance' is a theatre that is in a way the opposite of what real theatre is, because theatre is the re-presentation, to represent, to create fiction, whereas a lot

of the performances today are about presenting yourself, telling, so very different techniques and skills are necessary. If I am HIV and I go on stage and say I'm HIV and put a syringe in my arm and then stand there crucified, then this is very, very powerful, but if you have to do this as a non-HIV person then you need a lot of skill in order not to be rhetorical and ridiculous, but want to touch the spectators. So it is as if a lot of theatrical activity has in a sense become much easier. When Iben plays out her experiences of being a drug addict she has a real syringe, but she doesn't put the needle in her arm. She builds a huge illusion, a fiction, she puts the needle into a doll. The technique of really doing an action and creating an illusion of that action is very, very different from a craftsman's point of view.

But the younger generation cannot go back to the traditional theatre because you do not feel the necessity of measuring yourselves against traditional theatre. When I look at you I see the children of our time, who have no story, who are not attached, not anchored to any particular awareness of belonging somewhere. You belong to the whole world, you are cosmopolitan. On the one hand this is very beautiful, on the other it gives this feeling that you have nothing to enter into a dialogue with, and to have a dialogue means to say "Yes" or "No", "I agree with this point" or "I don't agree with this point", so the fact of consciously or unconsciously knowing where you come from gives you the possibility of having the awareness or the sensation that you can move towards something else. The questions are "Where do you come from?" and "Where are you going?". You cannot ask where you are going if you do not know where you come from.

It is not that I knew all about the issue of tradition from the very beginning, I built it myself, the theatre school did not teach me this. For the last thirty years I have been

living on the margins of theatre and I have been trying to build my tradition so when I present this vision of theatre history, it is a very particular vision. I speak of legacy, of professional identity, of professional history, but I was not given this by my master or by the the drama school, it is something I myself built out of ideological necessity. I want to know what I am doing and give a meaning to what I am doing. It is very difficult to give a meaning to what I am doing but I don't want to be a sort of blind instrument manipulated by circumstances. I want to fight against circumstances. I believe enormously in the fact that an individual can change history, therefore a certain knowledge of history is important. Not in general, but certain things that can be useful for the protection of this ideal, dream or necessity that I have that means that theatre must be an island of freedom. But this island of freedom must be protected and able to interact with the rest of the world.

L.S. But is the idea of building a tradition to do with building something over time until it arrives at a certain point, and then you keep it intact as it is, or is a tradition something that is always evolving? The Eastern masters at ISTA, for example, come from a tradition that has a fixed form, and yet they evolve their work within this.

E.B. The tradition is you, you are the tradition. What you create, embody, incarnate, what you choose in this very moment to give birth to, is just a prolongation of something created before. Most of us do this in an anonymous way, not even knowing where this comes from, but you are the tradition, this is what I feel, I don't know what else the tradition can be. The tradition is what I have received, something I have been able to name as belonging to me, to my legacy, whereas other things do

not belong to me. I don't assume responsibility for what my father did. I don't see why I should have a bad conscience because my father's generation went to Abyssinia and killed Abyssinians. This is what they did, but this is not my tradition, my tradition is something different. I can say that these events belong to European history, and I am a European. But there is another tradition in what I am doing: how to belong to that group of intellectuals, even in Italy, who fought against the fact that Italians went to Abyssinia. This is a very profound meditation on history, which in reality concerns what you refuse or accept in the present. The meditation on history, or the past or tradition is concerned with your attitude towards the present.

L.S. But don't you also have to fight the present conflicts, you talk of remembering the root of your conflicts, the original impetus. But then you also speak of how *Kaosmos* is in someway concerned with what is happening in Yugoslavia, which is a present conflict.

E.B. Yes, but Yugoslavia is a sort of tragedy like, Oedipus. Poor Oedipus can't do anything, he's in this *machine infernal*. He can't do anything, and tragedy is when there is no solution, and in a way you have a feeling that there is no solution. What solution can you have to Rwanda? I mean I really feel the same immense revolt against an almost metaphysical law that has created such things. Of course there is the humanistic, United Nations approach, but you know that it will not work.

A Description of an Actor's Score

Following are two notations depticting an abstract sequence of actions fixed by the actors into what the Odin terms 'a score'.

A single actor's score

The following is a notation of one of Tina's scores. This score was used in a scene in which there were many pieces of coloured cloth on the floor. The scene itself was dropped but Tina's score was kept, elaborated and put in to a new scene. This is the kind of notation made early on, in order to help the actors remember their scores and their use of props:

> Tina bends down and leans back, she opens her eyes, makes a claw with her hand, she turns, she picks up a piece of cloth from under her with both hands, her right hand comes up to her face. The cloth is infront of her face, she plays with the cloth as she turns to face us. The cloth half hides her face and then completely covers it as she starts to slowly walk round. She turns back right and sits. Again takes a piece of cloth infront of face, leans back and twists, makes flea like actions with her legs, falls to the ground and grabs a new piece of cloth. She stands and faces us, looks up and drops the cloth. She turns and goes down again, facing back right, she stands on another piece of cloth. She picks a piece of cloth up with fingers of right hand and flicks it round her twice, right to left and round to back. She drops it onto her arm. She gathers some new pieces of cloth, jumps fowards and backwards, kneels, rises, kneels facing back, picks piece of cloth up and throws it and turn left to face us, pick up big piece of cloth in left hand and drops it, drops the piece she is holding in her right hand. She suspends and stops a piece of cloth held in both hands three times. She holds a cloth between her hand and left foot, She drapes the cloth over her shoulder, then holds it up like a mirror. She turns as she holds it. She then holds it in her left hand and pulls the cloth over herself, she kneels facing the back. She stands and holds cloth between finger tips of both hands. She pulls up and leans back to face us, her fingers point under the cloth.

Such a sequence is a typical actor's score: a series of dynamic and abstract actions.

A fixed score combined with an improvisation

The following description is a notation of Hisako doing her fixed score, while Julia improvises around this score. This is the kind of situation described in the chapter 'The Methodology of Sea-Sickness' in the section 'Working with one fixed score and one improvised'. This material was lost once Hisako left the process, it is however indicative of how such a scene might be constructed:

> Hisako walks forwards and Julia follows behind her and then comes infront of her. Hisako raises her arms and Julia crouches down. Hisako makes clawing actions and Julia copies her, Hisako begins to move in the space and Julia holds her round the waiste and follows her movements. Hisako stops and sticks out her tongue. Julia goes to touch Hisako's tongue with her fingers, Hisako withdraws her tongue. Hisako begins to move in the space again and Julia copies her actions. Hisako looks over her shoulder and sees Julia who is now behind her. Julia raises her arm as Hisako looks behind her and then lifts Hisako's foot and begins to pull her backwards. Hisako sits down in a 'buddha' position and Julia stands over her from behind. Julia pushes her palms down either side of Hisako's head. As Hisako moves Julia reacts with her, pushing her right palm towards her. She goes to embrace Hisako from behind as Hisako walks forwards, out of her reach. Hisako goes down on to the floor and Julia's arm follows her down and remains hovering over Hisako's bent body.

Articles on *Kaosmos*

In English:

Risum, Janne, 'Real Grain, Surreal Pain' (unpublished text, Denmark,1993). The full text is shown here.

Taviani, Ferdinando, 'A Theatre of Ice and Warmth: on the Thirtieth Anniversary of Odin', *NTQ*, vol.XI, n.42 (May 1995)

In Italian:

Caporali, Marco, 'Cronistoria di "Kaosmos"', *Teatro e Storia* n.16, Anno IX (1994)

Savarese, Nicola, 'Trent'anni di 'Kaosmos': Sette Argomenti sull'Odin Teatret' (Italy, 1994)

Varley, Julia,'Vento ad Ovest' (unpublished text, Italy, 1995). The first two pages of this text are translated to English and shown here.

In Spanish:

Iacoviello, Beatriz Norma 'Kaosmos - el Ritual de la Puerta', Argentina.

In Danish:

Bredsdorff, Thomas, 'Uden Ord, Med Undertekst', *Ilden i Glasset, Aktuelle Teaterproblemer* 32, Århus (1994).

In French:

Rey, Jean-Dominique, 'Un Rituel Babare', *Superieur Inconnu*, n.2, (janvier-mars 1996)

In Polish:

Gozlinski, Pawel, 'Miedzy Teatrem I Rytualem', *Teatr*, n.12 (1993)

Gruszcynski, Piotr, 'Goscinne Wystepy', *Teatr*, n.41 (1993)

Western Wind: A Character Narrates

Julia Varley.

(The following is a translation from the Italian of the first two pages of this article).

A ghost wonders through Europe...the ghost is old. He knocks on doors, and no one goes to greet him.

Young, passionate ghosts, scarey and bewitching, old ghosts who are merely pitiful, spirits and shadows, memories and thoughts, souls and ideals populate our story. They wonder around without finding a place, they transform into that which they never were. Their logics will always be understood in retrospect. What remains are the problems that each of them has left as an inheritance.

Walls fall, names change, those who were in power are brought to justice, that which had seemed immutable suddenly changes. Wars break out, the big ones unite while the small ones separate, the city of Rostock becomes famous because young rebels attack a house of immigrants. And a theatrical performance is made.

I am also a ghost, a spirit, a shadow. But I don't knock on doors, I watch the others do this. I smile, laugh, console, sigh and wait, together with them. At other moments I sit and squint curiously at you. You, who do not yet exist and yet already want to know and debate that which has happened. You, who have not had the experience, but who want the right to know and remember. I look into the future of our story and I ask myself what will remain. I continue to look at you. My eyes fill with irony, my mouth wants to laugh and speak. I want to tell you of people and events that I have followed. What was that, which is now a performance? Where does that which now has a title - *Kaosmos* - come from? Where will it go, seen and remembered by only a few spectators?

I imagine that I - the ghost, the spirit, the shadow - have always existed. All becomes and transforms. My existence took on other forms and the story I remember is confused. But precisely this confusion is my form. It is from this chaos that cosmos is born. And it is also in this way that the performance *Kaosmos*, of Odin Teatret, is born.

Like all ghosts, I choose the room in which I wish to appear. The house I live in is the theatre. Now I am called Doña Musica and I am one of the characters in *Kaosmos*. My name is taken from the character in *Le Soulier de Satin* by Paul Claudel, a princess who whispered "those who no longer know how to speak should sing". But how was I born? Is it the actress, Julia, who has created my form? Or is it I, the character, who has revealed the actress? Is it the actress who has moulded her energies and transformed them into Doña Musica? Or is it I, Doña Musica who has moulded the energies of the actress? But these questions do not help in the understanding of why the character - like the performance - is a potentiality, a tendency towards existing, just like those particles that jump and dance within an atom. The physicist Werner Heisenberg defined these particles, these tendencies towards existing, as something that lies between the idea of an event and the event itself, a strange species of physical entity that is situated between possibility and reality.

The process of creation of *Kaosmos* has taken some strange paths, as though it belonged to that subatomic level at which matter is not found with certainty in precise places, but have rather a tendency to be in a place, and the events do not occur with certainty in specified moments or in specific ways, but rather have a tendency to take place.

How can I tell you about all this? All the concepts we use in order to describe experience are limted, they are not aspects of reality, but creations of the mind, they are parts of a map, not of a landscape. I'll be biased: one can't say everything, and I need to speak of that which I know best. In *Kaosmos* there are eight other characters and each of them could add other conflicting stories to mine, oposing opinions and important details.

Kaosmos had its official premiere at Odin Teatret in Holstebro, in Denmark on the first of April 1992. My smile returns. Is it a joke? Is this the date on which a performance should be born? This is the day on which we think we will be able to grasp something that however continues to transform.

I will go back in time in order to begin speaking about confused stories. I could speak about the door, the handkerchiefs, the books, the costumes, the old woman, the director, the actors, the material, the corn, the carpet, the space, the light, the music...but I prefer to speak of the confusion. I could tell the story of the director, or of Eugenio Barba. I could tell the story of the characters, of their actors, or of Kai Bredholt, Roberta Carreri, Jan Ferslev, Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Tina Nielsen, Isabel Ubeda, Julia Varley, Torgeir Wethal and Frans Winther while working on *Kaosmos*. And I who speak, who am I? The character Doña Musica? The actress? Or Julia?

I speak in the first person: I am Doña Musica, and I am not. I go backwards and forwards in time. Just like those particles that jump and dance within the atom. This is why I say I am a ghost, a spirit, a shadow, something that cannot be known and captured. A person's shadow cannot be measured, the photograph of the spirit cannot be published and the tales of a ghost cannot be controlled.

In *Le Soulier de Satin*, Claudel makes his Doña Musica say: "When one can no longer use words, except for dispute, why not then realize that beyond the chaos there lies an invisble sea at our disposal". They say that chaos is the art of constructing complexities from simple elements. Chaos obeys a hidden order which is unpredictable but indisputable. Chaos, because it always obliges us to look anew, is the creator of forms, information and order. A strange and paradoxical order which scientists define with the term 'strange attractor'.

Those who think that the 'strange attractor' in *Kaosmos* is the director, Eugenio Barba, are wrong. It is precisely because the 'strange attractor' works and is free to follow its mysterious logic and to create its own order that Eugenio Barba can follow the hidden threads presented by the actors and the disorder of his own images. It is precisely because experience has taught Eugenio that the beat of a butterfly wing in Japan can cause a hurricane in Denmark that he is a great director who knows how to leave the 'strange attractor' to its work, letting live that which the performance itself decides.

The 'strange attractor' is like a mind that creates, a brain that cannot be found, busy keeping the cells, systems and body of the performance that, in this case will be called *Kaosmos*, alive.

REAL GRAIN, SURREAL PAIN

- The arabesque of Odin Teatret's Kaosmos

The only effective consolation in the face of death is that it is part of the cosmic order; if chimneysweepers were exempted from it, we should resent it very much indeed.
Arthur Koestler[2]

Mirrors Suspended in a Box

The space is not empty. A theatre space never is. And when the spectators are let in, a character already occupies the rectangular space. A chimney-sweep sits on a stool in front of a white door, which is covered by an oriental rug. He studies us, resting his hands on a shovel. Are we supposed to leave through that door? The rectangle entangles the different realities of the spectators and the actors into one inseparable knot. It is a knot which is already set to work in space and time.

The spectators sit on two sides in an amphitheatre which mirrors itself. Two concave screens made of white cloth close the space in at opposite ends. A carpet of a soft ochre-yellow material covers the floor. From each screen hangs a row of small halogen lamps. Below the lamps two empty white wooden benches confront the empty space in front of them, mirroring an opposite pair at the other screen. The identity of the screens mirrors the doubled amphitheatre by 90 degrees. The metaphor which comes to my mind is that of a rectangular box consisting of four mirrors, two with people sitting in front of them, and two with people concealed behind them. The white blankness of the two screens establishes a visible absence, or invisible presence. White contains all the other colours.

A theatre space is a model of the world. This open box in which we sit may just as well be a model of the mind. Or, if you change your personal sense of dimension once again, like Alice stepping through the looking-glass, you may mentally shrink to the size of a particle in an energy field between experimental screens. Like the box Niels Bohr designed in order to catch the indeterminate interplay between wawes and particles which is all that we are able to recognize for the present. In theatre, like in the surrealistic physics of the twentieth century, everything may assume opposite meanings, including the voyeur-particle in the box. Surrealism appears where metaphysics disappear, but only to testify the dilated reality of its own surreal disguise. The eternal Other, or other Half, is constantly present in this space.

From the point of view of practical theatre, the space is minimalistic and functional. Your points of orientation as a spectator depend upon where you happen to take a seat. The empty ritual of theatre is about to perform *The Ritual of the Door* right here. That is, Odin Teatret's performance *Kaosmos*. The white wooden door stands in front of the screen opposite the spectator's entrance. It is partly covered by an oriental rug with a dense pattern in red, brown, and yellow. The actor Jan Ferslev sits in front of the door on a wooden stool, dressed as a chimney-sweep. Under his black top hat he watches us with a strange smile. He takes his time. He rests his hands on the shovel which he leans on the floor between his legs. The handle has a string. After some time he strikes it. A deep, broken chord emerges. A weird sound[3].

The Tying and Untying of Butterflies

A woman in black enters in a strangely age-less dance, groping her way into the space, as if disturbed by the dissonance of the shovel. Her face is pallid and almost immobile, but not unkind.

She seems to be listening to something. "Inside" her is the actress Julia Varley, with pale make-up on her face. Her long, grey hair, a wig, hangs loose down her shoulders to her waist. She wears a long black cape of a thin and transparent material, and underneath it a long black dress with verdigris lace on her chest and forearms. The lace is fastened between her fingers like a semi-glove. The bottom of her dress has a meandering flower pattern in gold. It looks faint in the *clair-obscur*. The seam almost covers her elegant high-heeled shoes which are adorned with metal at the back of the heels. She moves with resistance, contrasted by flashes of impulse. Suddenly moves as would a young, childish woman, but only to display in the next second the calculated movements of a very old woman who resists moving at all, and is determined to keep her futile extrovert movements at the necessary minimum. She goes to the spotlight in the middle of the floor and reaches out towards it. Here she continues her movements on the spot, humming and grumbling almost inaudibly.

This female sage, or wise child, is a coincidence of oppositions who negates herself eternally. Much like the moon, she is all ages in one but transcends them all. Covered with layers upon layers of concealing fabric, she still shines faintly through like the moon on a dark night or the touchingly human fingers of a bat. She takes out a lace handkerchief and ties it into a knot. Then she lifts her right hand above her head and makes the butterfly fly with the movements of her hand.

Butterflies have a short and fragile life. Short like those epiphanies in real life when such hidden human qualities emerge as the past insisted on calling the soul. And fragile like possible vulnerable intensities of moments of theatre. In the event, each character in ***Kaosmos*** receives his or her handkerchief or butterfly from Doña Musica (she it is, from Claudel's *Le soulier de satin*[4]). And in the end, there turns out to be a slightly different end for each character. Some of them have to accept that their butterfly is removed again. Others have to

hand their handkerchiefs back. Like in the Dance of Death, they have to face the approach of death in sudden surprise and without protest. *"Even butterflies must earn their living"*, Doña Musica simply states once and for all in the middle of things. As always kindly, and a little sadly detached.

In a very literal Aristotelian sense, she is the one who ties and unties all the knots. She emerged from out of a chord on the Chimney-Sweep's shovel. She is like a goddess of the moon and the earth who knows that it is not worth the trouble to interfere with the results of her own fatal makings, but still shows the impulses to do so. She just takes the last character's handkerchief, and leaves with her. She shows a pragmatic pity and even a discreet humour. Doña Musica doesn't seem to enjoy her job especially. She doesn't conceal it more than is necessary. She couldn't. She has a sufficient supply of handkerchiefs, and she never weeps.

A white handkerchief for The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die and the Country Bride. The Man also wears a bright blue butterfly around his neck, and when the time is ripe, he undresses and becomes a woman. A light blue handkerchief with a white border for The-Man-From-The-Country, who goes to the Doorkeeper and asks for admittance to the Law in Franz Kafka's short story *Before the Law*. A black handkerchief-butterfly with a white border for The-Mother-Who-Searches-For-Her-Child-Stolen-Away-By-Death, in Hans Christian Andersen's fable *The Story of a Mother*[5]. And she has a handfuld of white embroidered extras for other possible souls. And even some more fanciful ones, which Doña Musica uses in different ways such as for sails and ropes, with the shovel as mast and the sickle on top of it.

When all the butterflies have been moved and removed, and all the handkerchiefs have been handed out and collected again, the performance is over. She leaves. It is, once again, nothing but the old story of the moth and the flame. When all is said and done, it is impossible to tell who is the victim and who the

executioner in this handkerchief business. Whether life mirrors death or death life, *cosmos chaos* or *chaos kosmos*. The spectators have entered a model of *chaosmos*. We all brought our shadows when we entered, and we do not know which part of us shines through the most in the spatial *clair-obscur* established between the motionless Chimney-Sweep and Doña Musica's dance of oppositions. If this is Hades, the flying butterfly in her hand soon moves us to other shores. It makes a man rush in.

The Grain and the Word

The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die is gasping for breath. His hair is dripping with water. He is real. He wears an anonymous grey Prince of Wales suit, a white shirt and a bright blue butterfly. He calms down. He says something in Norwegian. *"Jeg leter efter landet hvor man ikke dør"*. Torgeir Wethal performs him. The astronomical time is March 1993, the place Holstebro, Denmark. It is morning, and a cold day outside. Why should a man not be born in his suit?

"I am looking for the land where no one dies".

There is a white door in the room. It has four brown books in different sizes attached to it. Sometimes it is covered by a red rug, and sometimes it is revealed. Sometimes it stands up and sometimes it lies on the floor. Sometimes it is carried around, sometimes slowly and sometimes fast. Sometimes it makes somersaults. Sometimes it is open and sometimes it is closed. Sometimes someone knocks on it, and sometimes someone knocks it about. Sometimes it slams. Sometimes someone tries to go through it but fails. Sometimes it is unhinged and separated, and sometimes it is united. At one time it is a boat with mast and sails made of handkerchiefs in different pastel colours knotted together, set sailing by Doña Musica. At another time it is a grave which the Chimney-Sweep digs. Finally Doña Musica changes it into a corn field with real corn, but the corn is destroyed the next moment by a procession of trampling feet. The door is just a simple wooden door with white paint. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die

observes the door at some distance and sometimes approaches and uses it in different ways. He forces himself through it. But in the end, he chooses to make another kind of exit.

Sometimes the actors are scattered across the theatre space like isolated particles, each doing his or her own actions. Sometimes they relate to each other in small groups, working on sections from different stories. Sometimes some of them just watch the others from the white benches. And sometimes they all swiftly coordinate into wawes of actions which turn the whole space upside down, moving the door from one screen to the other, sweeping the oriental rug to another position on the floor, or simply reversing the direction of their physical actions between the screens.

Once the door lies unhinged on the floor. The frame rests on top of it at a right angle. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die lies down to rest in the frame in a crucified position. Doña Musica places some ears of rye in his hands. Why should a fragile ear of rye not carry the meaning of a solid nail? And why should the corn not be ripe the moment it is sown? She approaches him with her sickle, cuts some of them, and leaves him. He picks up another ear of corn. He eats it. Simultaneously Doña Musica hisses. When he has finished swallowing he speaks. *"Nå knuste jeg kornet. Var det en virkelig handling, eller var det teater-fiktion?"*. He stops talking and throws away the stem. Some grains and bits of straw lie scattered upon him and around him. He pulls the red rug over his head and disappears beneath it.

Si le grain ne meurt ... Will the grain not die if you do not know the language? There was a grain, then it was eaten, then it was named by the grain of a voice[6]. Torgeir Wethal is a Norwegian actor. I am a Dane. I understand what he says. Spectators who are not Scandinavians don't. Do they have to? Are the grain and the action of eating the grain not real? Does the voice in the body in the grey Prince of Wales suit not really refer to them?

"Now I crushed the corn. Was it a real action, or was it a theatre fiction?"[7]

Do you know more than you already did when you add the information of the unintelligible words? Do I know less than you because I knew the words all the time? Do those who read this not have to see the performance now that they know? The irony of the words refers to the metalanguage of the performance: in fact of any performance. The dilated reality of a theatrical action offers more layers of perception than a spectator usually activates consciously. You perceive them all nevertheless with your senses. In the moment you focus on some rather than on others. In order to recognize the others you have to change your focus, and, to a certain degree, to know how they are made. They are there all the same, but perhaps unnoticed. Later, if you so wish, you may visualize and relive the experience of the different layers of your perception through an act of recollection. You can reactivate them in your body memory and repeat them in your mind, recreate them in your own words, or - if you are an actor - in actions which you perform.

When an actor speaks a line in a traditional play the spectator has to listen, and consequently may foreground the line to such a degree that the complexity of the accompanying chain of physical actions may go unnoticed. With Torgeir's line the reverse is the case. The visual situation is sufficiently redundant in itself. At the end of it Torgeir speaks this line, but most spectators outside Scandinavia won't understand it. They will only hear the obscure physical poetry of a chain of sounds emitted by a foreign tongue. The complexity of the chain of significance in the words will go unnoticed. The composition of Torgeir's physical score is such that it exposes the meaning of his words to some spectators and hides it to others. Quite simply however, all he does is to speak his own language. The words just name what is already there in front of us. They are strangely redundant and ambiguous. To strangers they are nothing but the fact of saying them.

so what are the words for? What is the meaning of saying them to strangers? By being spoken at all, the words increase the poetry of the situation by foregrounding it. Their referential function does not depend entirely on their meaning. From a psychophysical perspective, you may even argue that their unintelligibility augments their effect. It is a case of language as physical action, where the meaning of the speech act precedes the meaning of the words spoken. Where the fact of the speech act itself is foregrounded. Perhaps someone who does not understand what the man says will pay attention to the fact that he is trying to say something important. Like in a happening, the division line between art and life is broken so as to open into a continuum, and to create a rite of passage which transcends the borderline of representation. Here, and elsewhere, the performance moves in a simultaneous field where closure and disclosure of representation are made to interact as live facts which are foregrounded simultaneously[8].

The Songs

The performance has songs and music from beginning to end. Its basic musical quality is that of an oratorium. The Chimney-Sweep's initial chord created Doña Musica. Doña Musica created The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die. As Doña Musica takes out more handkerchiefs a moment later, the other actors suddenly emerge one by one from behind the screens in a wawe of song and music. They sing, in part-song, the first stanza of the musical *leitmotiv* of the performance - the surreal psalm *The Seventh* by the Hungarian poet Jószef Attila[9]. Stanza after stanza the poem presents a disharmonic polyphony of lives, all caught in the stages of life between birth and death. The five stanzas present five times six lives, 30 in all. All end in the refrain "*You will be the Seventh*". The actor-chorus sings the poem in Danish in a free adaptation by the musician Frans Winther. Much like a Greek choir, they sing the five stages of the poem as counter-points to certain chosen points in the performance.

Many Danish words are spoken and sung in *The Ritual of the Door*. Many English, Italian, Norwegian, and a few Spanish words are heard as well, but considerably less. The majority of the songs are Danish. Folk songs, romantic songs, sailors' songs. Humorous, amorous, happy, sad, nostalgic. In the language cultivated by Hans Christian Andersen and Kierkegaard for its supple variety of small handy familiar words, always moulding into new shapes like the clouds trekking the sky in our small flat windy Nordic country surrounded by the sea. To me, the songs create a whole universe of polyphonic and nostalgic resonance, because I know them so well and by heart.

- *"Det er frygt, oh lille sømand, det er frygt"* (a sailor's fears). - *"Du gamle måne"* (Old Moon). - *"Nu titte til hinanden"*. - *"Jeg plukker fløjsgræs og ridderspor*er" (a young woman picking flowers for her lover). - *"Nu er det længe siden, men end det gemmes i mit sind"* (a harvest song). - *"Hvor kan man plukke roser, hvor ingen roser gror"* (love betrayed). - *"Se min kjole"* (look at the colour of my dress, it matches the profession of my lover). - *"Der kommer en skude med slukte lanterner"* (the black ship). - *"Han er lyset nede i dalen"* (He is the light in the valley). - *"Danmark, nu blunder den lyse nat"* (the white nights of Denmark).[10]

The songs are all slightly frosted as if coming in from the cold. Their shameless intimacy bares basic emotions of fear, love, longing, and belonging, but their emotional beauty is counterbalanced by the actors' chilly precision of delivery, and at times by a deliberate irony. They open up to mixed feelings of romantic exile, a nostalgia for the agricultural Denmark that was. The actors sing them alone or in part-song, sometimes supported by Kaj's accordion and Frans' violin. As a simple and involuntary psychophysical reaction the songs, and the chorus delivery of Joszef Attila's stanzas, become the sounding-board to my perception of the performance. They become a resounding bowl, into which the rhythms of all the different chains and grains of physical actions relieving each other in the theatre space are poured for me to drink. It is not a question of choice, but of cultural conditioning. Here they are, here I am. No matter who sits next to me.

Despite this emotional gooseflesh, of course I could not hope to empty the bowl, or to devour the overall artistic structure and emotional impact of the delivery, no matter which songs the performance might have chosen to present instead of the Danish songs. This fact is already inherent in the cultural tradition behind them. In Nordic mythology Thor, the fearless god of strength and thunder, once went to visit the giant Utgardaloke. Loke gave him a large horn of beer to drink. Thor was not used to defeat. He took three giant sips, before he had to admit that he could not empty the horn. Having humiliated Thor sufficiently in such ways, Loke treated him a good dinner which lasted well into the night. The next morning Loke sent Thor away. In parting, he told him the real nature of the horn: it had one end in the sea. If Thor would care to go down to the coast line he could see for himself how much the sea had withdrawn[11].

What, then, is the real nature of the impression the songs have left in me, the imprint they have stamped on my psychophysical memory as an indentation which I reverse in the act of recollection? And why would spectators in Italy, Germany, or Latin America, listen with care to those long chains of rough and soft Danish sounds which contain for them only an endlessly breeding polyphonic riddle? I would do as they, accepting that I did not understand the words, if the grain of the voices exerted the right kind of attraction on me. Despite the preachings of many linguists, the difference between knowing and not knowing the language of a song or of a performance seems to be a difference in degree rather than in kind.

Still, the question is: can't you fully appreciate the grain and the sense of a voice at the same time? Or is it so that you can't really enjoy the grain of a physical action, the deep reality of a simple physical action such as walking or speaking or singing or swallowing, unless it is disconnected from linguistic meaning? That is, unless it is defamiliarized?[12] But what does it actually take to have both? You may just as well, in fact, foreground a physical action through the reverse approach:

by going beyond the threshold of verbal significance, because the spectators know the words and their music only too well. For instance, like in my own case, because they were brought up with them and were moulded by them, so that the songs have conditioned their reactions far beyond their meanings, their phrasings, their metaphors, their allitterations, their assonances, and their rhythms - creating first of all a *mood*. It seems that there are two complementary esthetic means to transcend cognitive decoding: one is to make the decoding impossible by hiding or not establishing the key, the other is to exploit the automatisms of familiarity. The performance uses both approaches[13].

An Arabesque of Stories

Kaosmos is a montage which links three different stories so that they connect as three-in-one - as three complementary manifestations of the circular art of storytelling. They form a meandering pattern which relates to an invisible epicentre, and in this way is only the visible manifestation of an incalculable web. Each story is a different aspect of the life and death condition of existence.

Three stories, three protagonists. One protagonist accepts the law. The other revolts against it. The third embodies it.

The montage knits their stories together in counterpoint, much like Joszef Attila's life frieze knits seven parallel lives together in an unbreakable poetic web which is repeated in five subsequent stanzas. Each story is enacted as a valid unity in itself, but the way the stories interlace gives all of them the relative function of being only active links in a transmission of a greater knowledge, of which only three aspects are represented. This pattern is refound in Joszef Attila's stanzas, where six fates are known but the seventh is your own. In the multiplication table of *Kaosmos*, three and seven are one.

Eugenio Barba's montage not only ties the *"knots"* between the elements within each single story. It also sews the stories together into one open meta-story, by means of what I suggest to call their *"knots of knots"*, based on a principle of coincidence of oppositions. The resulting performance is a meta-story which has the form of an arabesque. There is no conclusion to this reverberating story. Except perhaps accepting the fact after the fact. It is one, or any, *rite de passage*. You may, like Odin Teatret in this performance, call it *The Ritual of the Door*.

The knitting of the performance has a literal physical counterpoint in the oriental rug which conceals the door when the spectators enter the space. Just like the door, the red rug is constantly moved around, and used as a prop in many fanciful ways. Now it shows its red, brown, and yellow surface pattern, and now the dense pattern of knots on its wrong side. With remarkable ostentation, the performance foregrounds its own theatrical consciousness of being an artificial presence constantly on the move. Much like Nietzsche's ideal Greek tragedy[14], it shows its own process of being constantly wowen in the moment through the physical actions of the actors. The ostentation is so obvious and at times so literal, that it borders on esthetic blasphemy. The spectators are left to wonder what it shows, and what it conceals behind the showing. However the blasphemy is to be found anywhere but where it might be expected the most, in the allusions to Christ.

There is Franz Kafka's Czech short story *Before the Law*[15]. The actors sing the passages as recitatives in Danish, and Doña Musica translates them to English: A Man-From-The-Country goes every day to knock on the door of the Law, but is never allowed to enter, and still returns the next day to knock again. Iben Nagel Rasmussen performs The-Man-From-The-Country. (S)he is dressed as an elderly spinster in blue. She wears a straw hat with a blue ribbon and a discreet, but bright blue veil, a buttoned blouse with white and blue stripes, a shiny blue,

pleated skirt with lace ribbons, short black laced boots with flat heels, and a pretty, but practical handbag. In this shape The-Man-From-The-Country performs "his" personal *Ritual of the Door* throughout the performance, always advancing towards it again with small brisk steps in endless optimistic and ironic repetition. Just like the character of Kafka repeats the same action throughout his life, only interrupted by death.

There is Hans Christian Andersen's Danish fable *The Story of a Mother*. The Man-From-The-Country takes a book from the door and reads the Mother's story aloud from it in Danish: A mother loses her sick child to Death and goes to seek it everywhere. She pays with all her songs, her eyes, and her long black hair in order to get it back, but eventually decides to leave it in *"Death's huge greenhouse"*, rather than revive it to the risks of an unknown destiny. Simultaneously, Roberta Carreri performs the Mother going through the different stages of her story, partly translating it into Italian as she goes. The Mother's hair is done in a voluminous coiffure in the style of the 1890s. She wears a light woollen waistcoat with heavy embroideries in many soft colours, a white shirt with black heavy embroideries, a tight dark bodice with red ribbons, a dark red and shiny pleated skirt with lace ribbons (a replica of the Man-From-The-Country's), and black nylon stockings in black shoes with high heels. She plants her feet firmly on the ground, at times gliding her feet along its surface with the technique of a Noh actor, and at times jumping and running in bursts of energy. The expressive theatricality of her cries and her gestures corresponds to the theatricality of her costume.

There is the story of The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die (Torgeir Wethal). He just arrives without a story, and may meet many associations: Artaud reborn, Osiris, Dionysos, Orpheus, Christ, King Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchai*, or in general terms: Heideggerian Man. He has already entered this text. He enacts his story with few words or other uses of the voice. His silence and verbal discretion are in marked contrast to the two other

stories, whose texts are being constantly foregrounded by the characters who recite them in successive sections from beginning to end. The story of The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die only reveals itself in the moment. But in fact he begins to enact his hidden agenda the moment he enters, and when he has finished he leaves. Torgeir Wethal has few, but so much more significant lines. He speaks them in Norwegian. The lines concentrate on time and death.

- *"I am looking for the land where no one dies"*. - (to the Country Bride): *"There is no hurry yet"*. - (taking out his watch): *"We have enough time left"*. - (sings to the Country Bride, who sings *"Thou hast a lap full of seed"*): *"Shall I cast it on the sand and turn it into fruitful land?"* - (interrupting the second Joszéf Attila stanza): *"There is no hurry yet"*. - (to the Country Bride): *"There is still plenty of time. Knock on the door and it will be opened for you"*. - (agitated): *"The sweat, the wrinkled face - everything is about to begin"*. - (to the Mother): *"If you know the way you don't need the eyes. Get up, rise"*. - (to the Mother): *"Go away, woman. You anticipate time"*. - (getting up): *"I throw the seed on the sand, and turn it into fruitful land"*. - (making his watch strike twelve on the shovel): *"Now the time has come"*[16].

His story unfolds as a surprise in the end. This time totally without words, and apparently sweeping away the other stories, as the incarnation of God as man-woman has to pay for being fragile human flesh, who has found his feminine self at last.

There are other characters from other stories.

There is Doña Musica (Julia Varley) from Paul Claudel's modern Christian chronicle play *Le soulier de satin*. She has already entered this text. In Claudel, her voice is that of the love music between souls which defies appearances and gives birth in spite of everything[17]. Like in Claudel's character, music, soul, and physical presence are inseparable in the Doña Musica of the performance.

There is The-Sailor-Who-Has-Seen-A-Mermaid (Kaj Bredholt), a character from a sailor's song[18]. He sings his song about the sailor's fears as a musical prologue to the presentations of the stories by Kafka and Andersen. He wears a light woollen jacket

with embroideries on the back, dark trousers, and shoes covered by light brown rubbers made of dyed gobelin. The actor uses his accordion as a part of the character, and moves with the great swaying steps of sailors on board in rough sea.

There is The Village Bride (Tina Nielsen), who enters just after The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, but whom he is not able to meet in the flesh despite the emotional contact they establish, and goes to hang herself. She is an androgynous folklore character dressed as a bride and a groom in one. She wears a long tunic with short sleeves, a belt and a fringed embroidered scarf around her waist, tight skin pants which are laced along the thighs, and a pair of long brown boots. Her bridal crown is made of braided rope, ears of corn, and small white flowers. From the crown a short white veil and white ribbons with little bells hang down her back.

There is The Chimney-Sweep, alias The Doorkeeper (Jan Ferslev), who was on guard in front of the door when the spectators entered. He is a character from Hans Christian Andersen's fable *The Shepherdess and the Chimney-Sweep*[19]. However, all that is left of Andersen's good-natured Chimney-Sweep and his delicate fiancée is the Doorkeeper's costume and his female twin. Obviously The Doorkeeper's home is not Andersen's romantic Copenhagen or Kafka's castle in Prague, but the underworld. The Doorkeeper's-Twin-Sister (Isabel Ubeda) is his replica. She wears a black top hat under a lace veil, a black blouse with embroideries, a shiny black, pleated skirt with lace ribbons (a replica of the Man-From-The-Country's and the Mother's - the skirts are three-in-one), and long black boots.

And there is the violinist (Frans Winther), who is playing all the time but is invisible. He is only seen for a short moment in the beginning as a black shadow playing behind the screen. The Chimney-Sweep points him out to the spectators when he introduces all the characters. He calls him The-Disinherited-Son-Of-The-Devil, but in the end the violinist steps out from

behind the screen as an epiphany of a vegetation god.

Then there are the body of actors, and their bodies and minds at work, their scores and their underscores, their different kinds of impulses (*sats*) which create a complex pattern of simultaneous and incalculable physical actions, reactions, and pauses, relating to the floor, to the space, to each other, and to the props.

And there are the body of spectators, and their bodies and minds at work in different ways. If the spectators so wish, they may choose to name the physical actions they watch in a bewildering variety of ways. Depending on which terms they pick from among the confusing polyphony of terms in current use in modern theatre, they may for instance speak of watching a score, a montage, a dance, a body-poetry in space, a performance text, or a dramaturgy based on fixed patterns of physical actions. Or they may simply insist to call it acting, or concentrate on watching what they see and name it for themselves.

As for the stories, myths, poems, and characters which the performance uses, the spectators may know a selection of those already. They may be able to identify passages and plots, as the narratives and stanzas are unveiled to their eyes and ears through the physical actions of the actors, while relating to their props, to the door, to the rug, to each other - or as their voices tell them or sing them. However, the threads of the single plots are so entangled, that their visual and auditive parallellisms, and physical points of contact or counterpoint, create a simultaneous effect, which is one of disorientation and coincidence of cognitive oppositions. The whole spin of significance is due to this overheating of surface signification. Much like Ariadne in Minos' labyrinth, the performance hands the spectator a thread - in fact: an irregular handful, but not a tourist guide which shows the most convenient direction to go.

Here again (in the performance as it is now) the spectators are

confronted with the Danish language as a help, or as an obstacle. At first glance, *Kaosmos* may seem to be a prominently "Danish" Odin performance - because of Andersen's fable, the Danish songs, and the prominence of Danish as a stage language. However this would be a sad mistake. It is only "Danish" by relative degree, and certainly not in kind. It would be much more to the point to call the performance Jungian. And from the point of view of theatre, it belongs to the non-existing country of Artaud. In fact, all actors simply speak their original language, be it Danish, Norwegian, Italian, English, or Spanish - and the spectator's recognition of what is going on soon proves to be a much harder job than just knowing the language. In the eyes of Danish spectators, the performance remains an intercultural hybrid on the move between cultural contexts. Not even in the eyes of the most benevolent nationalist could it be named monocultural. It resists such a dubitable notion. It is intertextual and intercultural at the same time. On the surface, the stories have different cultural and personal origins, but they are comparatively common among the stories and the mythologies of the world. What the performance owes to the culture in which Odin Teatret has chosen to live, is first of all the fact that Denmark - as Karen Blixen liked to stress - is *"a seafaring nation"*.

The three stories weave the pattern of an arabesque, but remain distinct. They coexist like the multilingual repertory of stories along trade routes or among sailors which is one of the core roots of culture. The stories and the characters are all European, while some of the costumes are South American (e. g. the woolen waistcoat and jackets), and others are Hungarian (the three identical skirts). Odin Teatret presents this cultural montage on tour to many kinds of cultures inside and outside Europe. Obviously the stories, the costumes, and the props have been sort of picked up along the road anywhere they were found, perhaps just outside your own house. Just like anyone may do over the years when you pick up strange shells and shining stones which you can't resist, in order to take them home with

you, and keep at home as an odd assortment of mixed but unique provenience, still matching beautifully, or creating the strangest contrasts in their artificial meeting, long after you have forgotten the provenience of each single stone or shell. The three stories too are all found objects. They are ready-mades. In the use it makes of them, the performance respects them as such. When the spectators enter, they are already spiked on the door: as books, or books-within-books. Because they are concealed by the red rug, the spectators don't see them immediately. This makes the door a door of fiction already established. It has more books than the performance uses. Whose stories do they contain?

Reaching Out for the Handle

The key question is who controls the door. The Doorkeeper does not allow anyone but himself to touch the handle. Much to the Doorkeeper's discontent, by pressing the handle from the other side, The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die forces himself through the door, closely followed by the Village Bride. The Man-From-The-Country is not so lucky. All through a life of neverending hope, she creates her own fate, not by acting, but by asking. Repeating at intervals the same polite inquiry in Danish, *"Can I enter now?"*, she waits patiently in front of the door.

She is allowed to take a small book out of one of the books which are spiked on the door, and to sit on the Doorkeeper's stool while she reads aloud the story of the Mother. Having read the first episode, the Man-From-The-Country puts the book in her bag, takes out a flute and plays a small tune. The Sailor intonates Jószef Attila's first lines once again - *"If you dwell in this world, your mother will... give birth to you seven times..."*. The Man-From-The-Country dances with him and the others. *"There is still plenty of time"*, the Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die announces from his bench. Doña Musica recites a new section of the story of the Man-From-The-Country, and is joined

by the other actors who repeat her words in song. Simultaneously the Man-From-The-Country and the Doorkeeper enact it. The Man-From-The-Country takes a closer look at the Doorkeeper who makes a hideous face in return. He only allows her to sit on the stool at the door. *"There he sits for days and years"*, Doña Musica informs, and the other actors repeat this in song. The Doorkeeper strikes a chord on his shovel. The door lies at his feet. The Man-From-The-Country approaches, to kneel down at the door in a new attempt. She knocks on it. As if in warning, the Doorkeeper strikes a new chord. *"The man from the country makes many attempts to be admitted to the Law"*, Doña Musica and the singers continue. The Man-From-The-Country lies down on the door. Suddenly she breaks her own principle of waiting: Slowly she reaches out for the handle. In order to show the strain of the effort, the actor produces a maximum of tension in all her body from her feet to her fingertips, and moves with resistance in slow motion. As if repeating his warning, the Doorkeeper strikes chord after chord in quick succession. Foregrounded by the stage light above her, her right arm stretches out to the full as she lies there, and her hand approaches the handle. In the final, full position she makes an ultimate spasmodic effort. As her fingertips almost touch the handle, her upper hand and her fingers tremble with involuntary life like the hand of a Balinese actor. The Doorkeeper reacts by striking the chord of his shovel. This makes her lift her hand towards him, and break the situation in resignation, getting up and withdrawing from the door once again. In her utmost, but futile attempt to break and destabilize the Law by condensing all her powers into one single point, and reaching out for the forbidden handle in one determined gesture, all that she was able to create, and to leave behind, was an impression of the essence of her human efforts and limits: the intense vital flow and inner pulsations of her hand at work.

Theatre is an androgynous space. So are human beings. The space of *Kaosmos* is full of androgynous halves of an archetypal nature, transcending the differences of sex and gender, and of life and death. This unity in variety is sometimes foregrounded and sometimes not - in a calculated hide-and-seek with the spectator, which is a safe way of indicating that it is *there*.

As complementary forces, the Chimney-Sweep and Doña Musica establish a classical mythological pair connected with the earth and the moon. They move freely in and out of all three stories, whose protagonists meet them in different functions.

As for the Chimney-Sweep, to the Man-From-The-Country he is the Doorkeeper. To the Mother, he is Death who steals away her sick child - a small Brazilian cavaquinho guitar dressed as a white rag doll - in the moment she involuntarily slumbers. To the Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, he is the force on whose lap the Man goes to sit in the beginning during the first Józef Attila stanza, and on whose lap he sits again just before his transformation into a woman, and finally he is the force to whom the Man surrenders when he is carried away by the final procession.

As for Doña Musica, her functions are even more differentiated.

To the Man-From-The-Country she is the one who replaces the Chimney-Sweep as a Doorkeeper in the end, makes the corn grow by shutting the door forever, and takes "his" life in peace.

To the Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, she is the discreet main agent in his story, coming and going like the moon in its changing phases. She grows the corn in his hand as he rests in the door frame, and harvests it with her sickle. She wipes his forehead with the dead Country Bride's handkerchief. With the Man-From-The-Country, she sails in the frame towards what is to come, while the Chimney-Sweep and his Twin Sister embrace at the other screen. She helps the Man undress, and dress again as a young bride. She places her sickle on the shovel, pierces his

butterfly on the sickle, and sets fire to it as the procession leaves with him.

To the Mother she is three-in-one, following Andersen's fable. She is Night, a woman in long, black clothes sitting on the door *"in the snow"*, who claims that the Mother sing all her songs before she tells her which way Death went with her child. She is the lake who claims that the Mother weep out her eyes in exchange for carrying her across, and puts her eyes on theatrical display. And she is the old woman who looks after the graves and the huge greenhouse of Death, and who claims the Mother's long black hair in exchange of her own snow white hair, dressing the Mother's head with her grey wig as a token of this reversal. But it is not she who restores the Mother's eyes. Like in the miracles of Christ, it is the Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die. The Chimney-Sweep and Doña Musica are complementary and at times interchangeable characters, but they do not rule alone in the cosmogony of *Kaosmos*.

The other characters form twins and threes, who again combine into new open patterns.

There is a female trinity, three-in-one: The shiny, pleated wide skirts of the Man-From-The-Country, the Mother, and the Chimney-Sweep's-Twin-Sister are identical. Their only difference is in colour - blue, red, and black, and in accessories. The three different female characters establish a visual coincidence of oppositions which transcends death, the gender of their names, and the stories to which they belong.

The central trinity, corresponding to the three stories, is another three-in-one which reflects the positive and the negative aspects of the animus and anima division. A woman plays The Man-From-The-Country as a female spinster, whose transcendental patience is rewarded against all odds in the end. A woman plays the ostentatiously feminine Mother who loses her male child, but in the end rejects it, and is rewarded by having her eyes

restored while still alive herself. A man plays the Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, who chooses to reject the Village Bride, only to become in his own metamorphosis a longing young woman who wears the Bride's crown and accepts "his/her" own future destruction.

The Sailor and the Country Bride are a pair of Shakespearean twins. Their costumes match. They are dressed as male twins, but one is in fact a woman who plays a bride. The Mother's woollen waistcoat matches their costumes. When the Country Bride courts the Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, it is he who becomes the missing link in an androgynous trinity connected with the theme of spring and marriage. And when the Man finally changes into a woman, they and the Mother become his opponents in the final procession.

The Chimney-Sweep and his Twin sister are an incestuous pair, two-in-one on the lookout for possible thirds. In her costume as well as in her actions, the Twin Sister is his female double. Assisted by his sister, the Chimney-Sweep is constantly changing his position in the space, defending the door by moving it around, coming out of it himself in ever new surprising ways, and keeping trespassers away by force. The Chimney-Sweep sneaks away from the Mother with her child, playing on the small cavaquinho guitar dressed as a white rag doll. He hands it tenderly to his Twin Sister, who lies down to adore it like a loving mother, after which he joins her. When the Country Bride dies, the Twin sister cuts two ears of rye which the Bride holds in her left hand and where she is about to hang the bridal crown. She gently carries the Bride away across her back, puts her down on the floor, jumps violently over the body in triumph, her heavy boots almost touching the torso when they hit the floor. She throws herself down upon the body, and shakes it in passion by lifting the belt with her teeth. Then she lies down to loosen the Bride's long fair hair and to caress her. In the end, the Twin Sister becomes the Chimney-Sweep's master, who suddenly kills him and loosens his long hair with the same

sensuous mixture of brutality and tenderness as before, crying *"Más! Más!"* while doing her jumps, and lying down afterwards to caress his body in the painless incest of death. The difference between androgyny and incest is that between a coincidence of oppositions and their incestuous implosion. In *Kaosmos*, only Death is a place so filled with love, once you have died your ambiguous death, that this difference does not matter anymore.

The Hanged Bride

Like so often in the cultural heritage of the West, a young woman is sacrificed in *Kaosmos* too. With his first line, *"I am looking for the land where no one dies"*, as her cue, the Country Bride enters behind the Man-Who-does-Not-Want-To-Die, immediately after his sudden entrance. She throws herself at his feet, and clings to his legs, while saying in Danish the unbearably fatal and overdetermined words, *"If you wish you can wash me clean"*[20]. *"There is no hurry yet"*, he answers in Norwegian[21].

Much in the sense of Plato, from the very beginning the Man and the Bride are twin halves of one androgynous being. And so they remain to the end. From the outset, however, in a sacrificial and mental rather than in an erotic sense. The innocent cruelty of the Bride's initial self-sacrificial words, which are also words of hope in a fatally indirect way, lies in the Christian assumption that the female body is dirty, and that the body is consequently a female and dirty part of man. However the Man's final act of cathartic self-revelation as a woman integrates the Bride's suicide into a greater pattern of accepting the body and facing death, which changes the initial sacrificial setup into a resurrection of androgynous Man-Woman acting on the acceptance of the body and of death. Facing, not seeking death, is at stake in this investigation into individuation across the mind-body split.

The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die goes to sit on the Chimney-

sweep's lap. The Chimney-Sweep gets up and presents all the characters to the spectators. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die takes his watch out of his pocket. The door is moved for the first time, from one screen to another, so that it stands in front of the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die. In order to prevent anyone from entering through it, the Chimney-Sweep presses the handle, putting all his weight behind his pressure. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die forces the door open from the other side, and enters through it, followed by the Country Bride. They are the only characters who ever do so.

By singing, in Danish, the first stanza of a poem by William Blake, the Country Bride presents herself to the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die.

Thou hast a lap full of seed,
And this is a fine country.
Why dost thou not cast thy seed
And live in it merrily?

The Man rejects her with two lines from the second stanza, which he sings in Norwegian.

Shall I cast it on the sand
And turn it into fruitful land?[22]

This poem proves to contain their whole story. As will be seen, like in the poem there is no seed in it without weeds. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die goes to sit on a bench. The Bride reaches out her hands towards him. He spits on them.

She begins to sing a Danish morning song for children, dating from Romanticism, *"Nu titte til hinanden"*: Now the fair flowers peep at each other again, the merry birds call out to each other, the children of the earth all open their eyes, now the snail will walk with his house on his back...[23]. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die tells her in Norwegian: *"There is still plenty of time. Knock on the door and it will be opened for you"*. The Bride goes to knock on the door, and, like the snail in her song, carries the open door away on her back. She places it on edge in the middle of the space so that it forms an open

triangle, with the oriental rug lying in front of its open end. The three women with identical skirts, the Chimney-Sweep's Twin Sister, the Mother, and the Man-From-The-Country, form a row with their hands around each other's waists, and move with a series of quick drumming foot movements like a locomotive onto the red rug, where they stop with their legs far apart. Still singing on, the Country Bride pushes herself through this triple vagina. *"God breathes on the eye when it weeps"*[24], she ends her song. She rises to her feet, and using her grip of the Twin Sister's hand as a counterweight, she stretches out her body, on tiptoe, in the opposite direction in the space until she reaches a position of maximum unbalance, stretching out her right arm to the full as she points towards the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die: *"It is he!"*, she exclaims with enthusiasm[25]. She lets go of her grasp, and goes to the door left behind in the middle. Standing in the open frame, the Country Bride hangs herself by suddenly pulling her long white ribbons upwards with a sharp jerk, and freezing the position. The jerk makes the bells tinkle.

Immediately, the Sailor intonates a merry folk dance on his accordion, supported in counterpoint by the invisible violinist behind the screen. In their merry dance, all the actors change their positions in the space. Then Doña Musica advances with her white handkerchiefs, and drops seven in a line on the floor. Dancing, the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die approaches them, while the Chimney-Sweep intonates a song in Danish about a rebel, *"They called him the corn"*[26]. The Country Bride dances towards the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die. They dance together on the butterflies. *"... he fought against injustice..."*, the Chimney-Sweep and the Sailor sing. The Doorkeeper's Twin Sister gives the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die a series of hard pushes. He tries to resist them, but ends at the opposite screen. Left at the screen at the spectator's entrance, where the door stands once again, the Country Bride stands turning her back on him. She turns, and enters through the open door. She advances to put down her veil on the oriental rug in front of it. Then she moves

back through the door again, turns in the frame, and watches the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die intensely. He has advanced so that he now stands on the rug returning her tender gaze.

The-Man-From-The-Country collects the handkerchiefs from the floor, and carries them away between her teeth. Dona Musica picks up a handkerchief which has been left. *"Even butterflies must earn their living"*, she remarks, and goes to dry the Country Bride's tears with it. She hands the handkerchief to the Country Bride, who hides it in the bosom of her tunic. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die watches them closely. He takes a step which makes him stand on the veil. At the opposite screen the Doorkeeper's Twin Sister screens the lamp with the shovel, darkening the room as if creating an eclipse.

The following short montage shows the loss of the love which might have been. It consists of three synchronized and simultaneous counterpoints which foreground each other in an effect of alienation. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die lies down on the oriental rug to caress the absent Bride's veil. Standing in the door frame as if trying to press herself through it with her hands by using all her force, the Country Bride sings in full soprano voice a Danish song in which a woman in love is collecting flowers in spring. *"A spring has come so mild and quiet"*, *"... for you have taken my peace of heart"*[27]. On the stool immediately to her right, as if totally ignoring what is going on, the Man-From-The-Country sits with her handbag open in her lap, concentrating on adjusting her make-up and applying her red lipstick, while looking critically into a small mirror in her left hand - sometimes moving her lips to the words of the song like when one listens to the radio. Simultaneously, the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die tears the Country Bride's veil to pieces. In this triple counterpoint, before and after the loss coexist with merry ignorance of it. The sequence is a triple coincidence of oppositions in time, space, and display of emotion.

The actor-chorus begins to sing a Danish harvest song, *"Now it is long ago"* - a recollection of the rye harvests in childhood[28]. Dancing with and on the veil on the rug, the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die accompanies the song with convulsive movements. He binds two strips around his palms as a sign of stigmatization, and holds out his bandaged hands towards Doña Musica. Simultaneously, the Man-From-The-Country sings the refrain of an old hit from the fifties, *"Moon, are you still my friend? Moon, then forget it again"*[29].

The Mother advances with water in her hands, puts it on the floor, and brings a tray on which is painted a lake with swans. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die watches the lake episode in the Mother's story closely. He reacts to the Mother's piercing scream, when Doña Musica blinds the Mother by covering her eyes with a black butterfly. Doña Musica makes a round with the tray in front of everyone present including the spectators, showing what it carries as it now drips with water: two small, surreal child's hands with a pair of eyes in their palms. When he sees the eyes on the tray in front of him, the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die walks backwards and clutches the doorframe, while the Country Bride embraces him from behind.

Like in the stations of the Cross, he takes the unhinged doorframe on his back and carries it across the floor, but sinks to his knees. The Country Bride releases him, and ends by throwing the door on the floor in front of the opposite screen. In a deep voice, the-Man-From-The-Country sings a line from an emotional Danish folk song about betrayed love, *"How can you pick roses where no roses grow..."*[30]. The Country Bride lies down in the doorframe, then leaps towards the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die. She kneels down beside him, embraces him, and kisses him. Remaining in this position, she hands out the handkerchief from her bosom. Doña Musica approaches and takes it, goes to wipe up the small pool of water left on the floor from the Mother's story, and returns to wipe the Man's forehead with it. He gets up from the Country Bride's embrace, and goes to sit on the door with

the veil, burying his face in his arms. The Country Bride goes to sit on the white bench at the spectator's entrance.

The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die sits on the door, while the last sequence of the Mother's story unfolds. He suddenly leaps towards the centre of the space, exclaiming in agitation in almost incomprehensible Norwegian, *"The sweat, the wrinkled face - everything is about to begin"*. The Mother stands silently in front of him with her eyes covered by the black butterfly, and he tells her, *"If you know the way you don't need the eyes. Get up, rise"*. She does not move. The Man-From-The-Country begins to sing a line from a Danish song, *"See my dress, it is white..."*[31], covers her head with the veil, and dances away with it. The Mother holds The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die in a grip. He makes himself free, saying *"Go away, woman. You anticipate time"*, and she leaves him.

The Man lies down to rest in the doorframe. (I have already described the following scene as seen from the Man's perspective). Doña Musica approaches with sheafs of corn and her sickle in her lifted hands. *"Where there is sea, there will be corn fields"*, she announces, harvests the corn she has placed in his hands, and leaves him. He eats an ear of corn, and speaks his line about the reality of fiction. As he hides beneath the oriental rug, the Doorkeeper's Twin Sister comes forward as Death with the sickle in her hand, to fetch the Country Bride (who has been "dead" for a long time by now by realistic standards). She approaches the Bride with a gentle and expectant smile.

The Bride removes two ears of rye from the doorframe, and is about to hang her bridal crown on them, when the Twin Sister suddenly cuts the stems. The crown falls to the ground. Gently, the Twin Sister carries the Bride away across her back. The bridal crown lies behind at the Chimney-Sweep's feet. His Twin places the Bride on the floor, jumps violently over the body in triumph several times, throws herself down upon the body, and

shakes it with her teeth in a display of passion. Then she lies down to loosen the Bride's long fair hair and to caress her. Simultaneously, the actors who are sitting on the white benches sing in counterpoint the Italian love song *"Amarilli mia bella"*[32]. When it has ended, the Twin Sister goes to the doorframe, in which the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die lies hiding under the rug. She rocks it with her foot. This makes him jump to his feet. He performs a jerky dance, while reciting in Norwegian half-song the lines from Blake with which he initially answered the Country Bride, *"I throw the seed on the sand, and turn it into fruitful land"*. With their hands on their backs, the Chimney-Sweep and his Twin Sister begin their merry, rhythmical dance, mock-chasing each other around the space, until suddenly the Twin Sister carries the Chimney-Sweep away across her back, and kills him with the same series of actions as before.

When the Mother renounces her child, the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die approaches her, spits in his hands like in the miracles of Christ, and removes the black butterfly from her eyes. Simultaneously, the other actors sing with full force some lines from a Salvation army song, *"He is the light in the valley..."*[33]. She leaves him.

The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die goes to put on the bridal crown. He quickly pushes the bench at the spectator's entrance around, so that it stands at a right angle to the screen, climbs the end which faces the space, spreads his arms, and shouts some fast and incomprehensible words in Norwegian. He crosses the space, and repeats his actions from the bench at the opposite screen. Simultaneously, Doña Musica and the Man-From-The-Country mount the doorframe as a ship with the shovel as mast, the sickle on top of it, and an open sail consisting of handkerchiefs in pastel colours knotted together. They sail in it, rocking the frame resting on the door as a see-saw. All the while, the Chimney-Sweep and his Twin Sister caress each other, lying on the floor at the violinist's screen.

Three things are manifest in the complex relation between the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die and the Country Bride which their physical actions have established: From their first, double, entry a harvest is being prepared. This changes the marriage rite which is visually announced, into the initiation of a pair which is going to be sacrificed. Second, in long passages narrative time has stopped, and a kind of liminal or emotional time has taken over, like in the limbo between the Country Bride's suicide and her abduction by Death. And third, the Country Bride's suicide is a self-sacrifice which is followed by the Man's self-stigmatization, and so becomes a manifest part of himself for better and for worse - like the Christian marriage ritual claims. He finally dresses himself with her crown, making it a double image of a bridal crown and the crown of thorns.

The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die carries the doorframe away on his back. At the violinist's screen, it is mounted on the door once again. The re-united door is placed parallel to the screen on the floor. The Man-From-The-Country rests down to lie with her head on the frame, covering herself with the oriental rug which has the wrong side up. The Mother gives her hair - the grey wig - to the Man-From-The-Country. S(h)e puts it on. Now totally restituted, the Mother leaves her and crosses the space to join the actors who watch from the benches in front of the screen at the spectator's entrance. From behind his screen, the violinist plays again. At the door in front of the screen lies the Man-From-The-Country. In front of the opposite screen at the spectator's entrance, the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die again sits as before on the Chimney-Sweep's lap.

The *Sacrificed Child*

The Mother has renounced her child. The Man-From-The-Country has grown old in his vain vigil at the door. Under the grey wig s(he) lies resting her head on the door in a last vain attempt, and Doña Musica announces: *"This door was made only for you. I*

am now going to shut it". She removes the book with the story of the Mother which the Man clutches in his hand, takes an even smaller book out of it, and shuts it.

The two stories meet in the hard facts: a child has been sacrificed, and an old man is going to die. Within this complementary logic of intertwining stories it follows that now, and only now, the time has come for the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die to take action. He is already waiting on the Chimney Sweep's lap, with his bandages around his hands and the Country Bride's crown on his head. Mirroring the beginning, the Chimney-Sweep strikes his dischord on the shovel once again. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die places his watch on the shovel. It strikes twelve times. The metal of the blade amplifies the delicate crisp hour strokes. Then he speaks.

"Nu er tiden inne".

"Now the time has come".

The two of them advance, and the Man takes the sickle in his hand. The Sailor sings the fifth, and last, stanza of *The Seventh*. *"Seven will go together to the grave"*, children and adults alike, no matter their personal fate. *"You walk under the tombstone of the world. You will be the seventh"*. The Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die sits on the rug with the sickle in his hand. The Chimney-Sweep removes the grey wig from the Man-From-The-Country, and hands it back to Doña Musica, who puts it on again.

The Chimney-Sweep begins to dig a grave in the open door. The Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die rises and begins to undress. Doña Musica helps him. With his shovel, the Chimney-Sweep throws a bundle of clothes into the middle of the space. The Man transforms himself into a woman with a long white skirt, a white piece of cloth to cover his breasts, thin white socks, a pearl necklace, the bright blue butterfly, and the Country Bride's crown. Now his attitude is that of a loving bride stretching out her arms in timid and tender expectation - like a Kore who has

finally returned to life.

Behind one mask there is always another, and the closer you get to whoever you are, the more it sticks. A group of the other actors undress simultaneously, exposing the modern clothes they have worn all the time underneath. They are the Village Bride, the Sailor, the Mother, the Doorkeeper, and the Doorkeeper's Twin Sister. As all the clothes fall on the floor, the Chimney-Sweep passes to and fro and carries them away on the shovel, dropping them in the open door. Sóme of them take whips and belts in their hands, like a gang of youths looking for excitement and trouble. Behind the characters was this ritual beat generation group. Behind the group are the actors who perform it. Behind the actors are the persons. They have chosen the clothes they now reveal, personally from among their private clothes.

Doña Musica removes the Man-Woman's bright blue butterfly. (S)he cries silently. Doña Musica lets it fly away in her hand and spikes it on her sickle, which she has fastened on the shovel beside the door. Then she sets fire to it. In the same moment Roberta, the former Mother, in her black bodice, red leather miniskirt and black stockings, approaches the Man-Woman across the floor and kisses him brutally like a s/m prostitute would, lifting her right leg and pressing it firmly around his thigh in the movement. After her Judas kiss she walks back to the gang and takes up her position as its leader. They begin to sing and dance in a modern hard-core version of a Dionysian procession, beating the rhythm with their belts and whips. When the procession approaches him, he jumps to sit in the former Chimney-Sweep's arms, his legs around his waist, and his arms around his neck. Once again he looks happy and ecstatic. The procession leaves with him, still singing in English. *"Can't you hear the clouds gathering. It's gonna rain. Come on in his arms..."*.

In the silence after their departure, Doña Musica approaches the door with sheafs of rye in her hands. The door has been left

lying on the floor in front of the screen where it originally stood. Wearing his yellow straw hat with the bright blue veil again, the Man-From-The-Country knocks on it in a last futile attempt. While she sings the Man's story, Doña Musica opens the door and places ears of rye along its frame. *"You came to my door and knocked..."*. The Man helps her. Doña Musica shuts the door. This makes the corn rise suddenly in the frame. *"... and the door was opened"*, she sings. She has made the corn grow by shutting the door. The corn is ripe the moment it grows. Like in any fertility rite, a sacrifice has been made. A young woman has been abducted. The Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die's bright blue butterfly is spiked on the sickle. It is burning. It stinks. It has become the *"stinking weed"* with which Bláke ends his poem[34].

The Grain of the Violin

Arcimboldo and the grain of the violin, or: how the sonorous grain of the violin became a real sheaf of corn. In the silence a new character emerges. In fact he was there all the time.

Throughout the performance the violinist Frans Winther has been visible only once, as a shadow playing behind one of the white screens. When the performance began the chimney-sweep pointed him out to us and gave him a name: The-Disinherited-Son-Of-The-Devil. Frans approached the screen from behind, so as to be seen as a distorted shadow profile moving to the tones of his violin. When all is said and done, this prodigal son now finally emerges. But his blurred, black image is gone. He is a mask. In a mirror reversal of his former invisible presence, it faces us without playing, standing between the corn field and the screen. Under his dark hat with its broad brim, the mask is a sheaf of dry green rye. The body of the musician is dressed in a black cloak like Doña Musica's, a heavy suit of green wool, and heavy brown boots. He holds the violin and the bow in his hands.

This is the way a surrealist like Magritte would have chosen to

concentrate into one single image the composite allegorical vegetable heads in Arcimboldo's paintings (like the allegory of *Summer*, or the Roman vegetation god *Vertumnus*). Roland Barthes saw this surreal quality in Arcimboldo's painted riddles. You can read them one way or the other, he said, and you will get different meanings out of them.

*""Everything can assume an opposite meaning" says Arcimboldo's palindrome; i. e. everything always has a meaning, whichever way you read, but this meaning is never the same. ... **Nature does not stop**"*[35].

The violin too does not stop. It just assumes the meaning of a sheaf of corn, while the violinist without a face takes his leave, facing the spectators in his surprising epiphany. Up to now The-Disinherited-Son-Of-The-Devil was an audible presence. Now he is a vegetation god standing at the corn field.

The violinist begins to play the tune of a song about the beauty and eternity which sleep in the white nights of the Danish summer, *"Danmark, nu blunder den lyse nat"*. The Man-From-The-Country surrenders his handkerchief to Doña Musica. In half-play, Doña Musica holds it out towards her. Smiling and laughing, (s)he chases it in vain. While the violinist plays on, they embrace and cross the space, leaving together hand in hand and disappearing behind the opposite screen - an age-less mother followed by a resurrected daughter figure in bright blue. When they have left, the violinist-vegetation god leaves by the same route, playing his tune while he passes the spectators and disappears behind the screen.

Behind the mask there is always a face. But in this performance face, persona, shadow, and archetype are caught in an intricate game. It confronts the spectators with a meandering pattern of stories and characters which creates bewilderment and suspense through indetermination and surprise. You never know which possible links are going to be activated next. In this interplay of physical presence and absence, appearances are sometimes true and sometimes not. It is not always easy to tell whether the visible characters in front of the spectators are closer to the

physical presence of the actors as persons, or whether they are closer to the mental presence of the personae, shadows, and archetypes which they activate. Where the archetype stops and the person takes over, is left for the spectator to decide. Like archetypes, the personal self has not one shape but many. Everything is the same, and everything is different. You cannot swim in the same river twice. Still we all seem to do it all the time as if we did not know and would not resist the flux.

The cosmic battle of the archetypes in the performance foregrounds one conflict especially. It is the conflict between the positive and the negative aspects of the mother archetype - between the psychic images of the good and the bad mother. The performance is not too optimistic. It begins with giving birth and ends not only in natural death, but also in probable killing. The destructive forces of the negative anima may seem to win in the end. However, the infinite arabesque of its stories makes such a rash conclusion impossible. In the sensual underworld of *Kaosmos*, Death is a beast of prey, and a loving friend stealing your love, but it is not a sadist. On this background, the final soft-cruel procession is a wawe which holds the warning that such an orgiastic phalanx is subject to the same inconstancy as everything else - since human beings are not gods.

Afterbeat: *Harvest*

The procession enters again. The former Mother leads. They cross the space singing and dancing, whips in hand. They move towards the opposite screen, marching over the door and through the cornfield. The stamping feet crush the corn. They turn and move back across the room. The Man-Woman-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die still crouches happily on the former Chimney-Sweep. They leave. The former Mother stays behind. She tramples the last ears of corn with her heels and follows them. In front of the opposite screen she turns. She looks at the spectators in silence, whip

in hand. She goes out. The sound of marching feet is heard from behind the screen. It dies out. "They" have left, whoever they were.

The Knots of Knots

The meandering pattern of actions and stories in *Kaosmos* resists direct reproduction in language. The stories contain and frame each other. Either they link to become an endless series of breeding stories. Or they link to become complementary versions of one and the same story. They link in many small physical actions which form the necessary *knots of knóts*. They also link in the use of certain props. The red oriental rug is one of them. The white door is another. The recurrent use of real grain - ears of rye, or sheafs of rye - is a third. Like in other Odin performances, objects are used as what Eisenstein called *"multi-farious images"*. Eisenstein was speaking of the use of props in Chinese theatre, cases where one and the same object, depending on its use, may have more than one meaning[36]. In *Kaosmos*, the actors use in fact a whole variety of complementary objects to create such effects in the stories and in their linkage. Some of the accessories weave labyrinthic accessory themes.

The Family of Butterflies: Doña Musica has made the butterflies fly. The characters are all there in the space. Doña Musica throws a handful of white handkerchiefs on the floor. The Mother (Roberta), The Doorkeeper's-Twin-Sister (Isabel), and the Man-From-The-Country (Iben) joins her to dance on them, jumping from one to the next. The Man-From-The-Country dances with his light blue handkerchief. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die (Torgeir) and The Village Bride (Tina) join them. The Doorkeeper's-Twin-Sister gives The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die a hard push. The Man-From-The-Country collects the white handkerchiefs from the floor and carries them away between her teeth. - A moment later Doña Musica takes another handkerchief from the floor, dries The Village Bride's tears with it, and hands it to the Village Bride

who hides it in her bosom. - Later, Doña Musica blinds the Mother by placing a black butterfly in front of her eyes. - The Village Bride embraces the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, and hands out the handkerchief from her bosom. Doña Musica wipes the Man's forehead with it. - The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die spits in his hands, and removes the Mother's black butterfly, thus restoring her sight. - Later again, Doña Musica removes the bright blue butterfly which he himself carries around his neck. She spikes it on the sickle at the door and burns it. It stinks. - Finally the Man-From-The-Country surrenders his handkerchief to Doña Musica, and smiles and laughs as (s)he chases it in vain, and they embrace and leave together.

The Book of Books (The Door): Four brown books in different sizes are spiked on the white door. They soon prove to be a circular series of books. Doña Musica introduces the story of The Man-From-The-Country. (S)he goes to the door and knocks. Comes back and knocks again. This time the door is lying on the floor. The Doorkeeper comes out of it from underneath and shuts the door. The Man-From-The-Country opens one of the books on the door, takes out a smaller book and carries it away between his teeth. (S)he sits down on the stool and begins to read aloud *The Story of a Mother*. The Mother (Roberta) begins to enact her story. - Much later, when The Man-From-The-Country has grown old in his vain attempt to get admission to the Law, (s)he lies covered by the red rug, resting his head on the door. Doña Musica takes his book out of his hand, takes an even smaller book out of it and begins to read aloud the end of his own story. Then she enacts it and leaves with him.

The Wig: Doña Musica wears her long grey wig until The Mother accepts it in exchange for her own black hair. Then she covers The Mother's hair with the wig. Instead of a wig Doña Musica now wears a dark headscarf. And when The Man-From-The-Country has grown old, and lies with his head resting hopelessly on the door of the Law, he wears the wig too. But The Man-From-The-Country is restored to his younger self before he leaves the space with

Doña Musica, wearing again his yellow summer straw hat with the small, bright blue veil, while Doña Musica wears her wig once again.

The Stigmata: The Mother pays for her child with her eyes and her long black hair, and The Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die chooses to imitate the stigmatizations of Christ, after the Country Bride's suicide. The two series of stigmatizations are enacted in counterpoint, and with close spatial and physical contact. The Mother's is foregrounded with ostentatious extroversion and loud theatrical cries, while the Man's is enacted with introversion and in silence. At central points the stigmatizations interlace directly, across the logics of the stories to which they belong. The Mother enters slowly with water in her hands. Like in Noh acting, she makes her feet glide across the floor. She pours the water on the floor in front of The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, who sits in despair on the rug with The Country Bride's veil. Then Doña Musica advances and pours the water on a tray which has a picture in green and white of a lake with swans. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die tears the bride's white veil to pieces. He winds two shreds around the palms of his hands, like in the Christian stigmatization of the hands. Simultaneously, Doña Musica blinds The Mother, who emits a short and piercing scream. The Mother's black butterfly now covers her eyes. Doña Musica makes a round in front of the spectators, putting the surreal relics on theatrical display: the tray is dripping with water, and carries two small open child's hands with a pair of eyes in their palms. - Later, when The Mother renounces her claim to get her dead child back, it is The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, and not Doña Musica, who intervenes to restore her eyes by removing her black butterfly. Discreetly he crowns himself with the Country Bride's crown. The crown is a rope with ears of rye. It was the Country Bride who established his association with the corn used in the performance in the first place. As a consequence of this counterpoint technique, two rites of passage mingle effectively: the defeat of death, and the ritual of spring. The enactment of *The Story*

of *A Mother* is just as full of epic narrative and extrovert theatricality - of foregrounding - as the enactment of the story of Christ is held back in understatement until its final Dionysian reversal.

The *Stories of Stories*

The three simultaneous stories form a snake which bites its own tail. Because of their number there can be no match between them. There can be no *agón*. Their precarious balance has no end. The meta-story of ***Kaosmos***, then, is nothing but its basic story. It is the story of three-stories-in-one: in fact any story, as an open field of energy. There is no blasphemy in this. The enacted story of The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die uses elements from the stations of the Cross, and also from other religions. This refers to a matter of fact. Religions and stories coexist. After all, the New Testament is simply a collection of four different Gospels, in which each single evangelist tells his own variety of one and the same story. And this openness to variety is, in principle, the condition of any religious myth. The triangle of myths which the actors embody in *Kaosmos* creates a field moving in space and time in front of the spectators, as well as in their imagination.

This triangle is not a ritual or a dream, but like a complex poem, it activates a field which theatre can only embody through indirect indication. The missing link is the spectator - and his or her awareness of personal presence. Once you include yourself as a spectator, the real number of stories involved is not three but four. They form a full square circle: There is one who accepts the law. One who revolts against it. One who embodies it. And one, the spectator, who watches it all and is the only one who has a real freedom to move beyond representation. As the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die indicates to the Mother, *"If you know the way you don't need the eyes. Get up, rise"*. The spectator is free to create his or her own quadrature of the

circle.

A central meta-question in *Kaosmos* is that of the reality of theatrical embodiment. A physical action which an actor performs is a real action dilated into the paradox of illusion. But when does it also become real in the sense that it changes the moment and what comes after it? To which kind of reality does the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die refer when he asks: *"Now I crushed the corn. Was it a real action, or was it a theatre fiction?"*. Where does the imitation of the action end, and the action start? And, granting that a physical action in theatre may be more than just fiction, then what is contained in this liminality, considering the divorces between theatre and ritual, and between life and art, which the idea of Western evolution takes for granted? The live relationship between the character and the actor exists only during the performance, whereas in actual life the relationship between an individual and his or her persona(e) is a continuous process. Before his own metamorphosis the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die asks the infernal Doorkeeper exactly this.

The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die
But who is the protagonist of this performance?

The Doorkeeper
The one who dies at the end.

The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die
Is this theatre?

The Doorkeeper
Yes, this is theatre - a thread made of mischief and guile. The character dies and the actor returns to life.[37]

Quite literally, the protagonist is the character who dies in the end. But as a simple matter of fact, we do not *see* the Man die in the end. There is no answer to the question beyond the theatrical facts. Wisely, the Doorkeeper just states it. The empty ritual of theatre is a place in which you may die as a character without dying as a person, and return to life without the dead persona you just impersonated. From this perspective the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die is the character (or any character) who only exists during the performance. Simultaneous-

ly, he is the character's counterpart: the actor (or any actor) who returns to life after the performance - and the spectator (or any spectator) as well. We are the real protagonists.

The reality of a physical action in theatre resides in its never ending duplicity. Each action frames another, which may be visible or maybe not. Each action is part of a score, or story, which may develop in several ways and open to several others, or it is part of several scores, or stories, which merge in one and the same action. An actor is a person who incarnates. The question is not so much *what* as *how*. A spectator is a person who may believe in the incarnation in spite of his or her knowledge of the tricks. The question is not so much *what* the spectator believes, as the fact of the belief itself. It may happen at times that the dilated reality of fiction succeeds to outwit the supposed probabilities of what is perceived as empirical reality, and to transform them by coming true by proxy. After the performance, *"You will be the Seventh"*.

The Frames of Frames

The white door proves to be the sign of a principle that does not break. With its four books spiked on its white paint, it has the quality of a canon. It is only possible to approach the law which it represents by reading a story from one of the books, or enacting one which may be contained in one of them. It is only possible to detect what is behind the door in an indirect way, or in a sudden revelation. The mirroring space does not conceal that it has a metaphysical direction. This direction is horisontal, not vertical. When the spectators enter from behind one screen, the white door is already present, standing in front of the other. Like in a ritual, it is covered by a rug and guarded by a man. Then it is revealed, and used in no end of ways. The characters leave by the spectators' entrance. Left in the space are the spectators, the white door lying on the floor covered with crushed corn, and the oriental rug placed neatly on the

floor in front of it. The spectators have no option but to leave the way they entered and the characters left, and so, as they go out, to merge their own realities with those of the missing characters. In a reversal of the opening sequence, they leave the white door behind them, this time left behind without protection as if an act of purification had in fact taken place during the performance. They have witnessed that it was paid for by proxy. The door left behind is a final - and open - clue to the recognition that the Ritual of the Door has in fact taken place as announced - with the spectators as participants and witnesses to their own existence.

"A village in the heart of Europe; doors like walls and walls like doors. Every spring the villagers perform "The Ritual of the Door"". So the programme informs about the time and place of the events in the performance[38]. When the spectators enter the ritual has already begun. They are expected. The Chimney-Sweep studies them. The villagers have already masked themselves. Their sudden entrance from behind the screens creates an omni-presence which is reversed in their final exits through the spectators' entrance. The spectators are left to wonder about their own identity as spectators in the performance. In the ritual frame of *Kaosmos*, it is certainly ambiguous. Either the spectators are shadows on the wall, non-existant, dead, perhaps gods, or they are foreigners, or villagers too. In any case they have the final responsibility.

In his short dialogue with the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die, the Chimney-Sweep foregrounds the ambiguity of the performance. He does not do so in terms of ritual, as one might perhaps expect, but in terms of theatre. The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die entered with the words

I'm looking for the land where no one dies.

Not until the-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die finally decides that the time is ripe, does the Chimney-Sweep gives him an answer. I repeat his concluding lines.

The-Man-Who-Does-Not-Want-To-Die
Is this theatre?

The Doorkeeper
Yes, this is theatre - a thread made of mischief and guile.
The character dies and the actor returns to life.[39]

In his words, the Doorkeeper underscores the fictional theatrical reality of any ritual element which may have occurred, or may still occur in the performance - but in a cunning way he simultaneously contradicts his own words in action by speaking the words to another character, who is also an actor, and not to the spectators. As we know, the Man - or the actor behind him - has already asked once himself, whether his physical actions right now are supposed to be real or fictive. In this open system of frames, his final dialogue with the Doorkeeper is just another strange loop. It is just as self-referential as the pattern of interlacing stories. It leaves the question of reality in a spin of paradoxical indetermination, much like an arabesque in a Bach fugue or an Escher painting[40].

The spectators have watched a trilogy performed simultaneously as three-stories-in-one by characters, chorus, and gods. At the same time they have assisted in the stages of a complex profane ritual. Simply by being present, they have become entangled in a web of realities which turns out to be their own. A spin of significance has released the separate speech of signification. Whether they feel that they have changed in the process, only the reverberations in their ears can decide for them. Some will hear a cacophony, and others a concordant discord.

The Spectator's Loops

This analysis is an act of recollection. It is a partial re-creation in writing of my own *"performance text"* as a spectator, as it has developed of necessity in the form of an elaboration of interlacing fragments.

When I saw *Kaosmos* for the first time in March 1993, I had no

special approach. I just followed it with the usual half-conscious, constant scanning. From my perceptions I created my own personal knots and loops, knowing that they consisted in personal truths of a multifocal nature. Like any theatregoer, I was only conscious of a selection of what was offered to me in simultaneous complexity, and was only able to verbalize an even smaller part. It was valid all the same to myself as a *pars pro toto*. If I had never seen the performance again, like any theatregoer I would perhaps have needed no more than that. I accepted my partial disorientation as the condition of any knowledge. Obviously the performance forced me to, in case I should not know or had forgotten. However I also had the impression that despite the professional perfection of its physical scores, the performance had not quite matured yet. The next time I saw it, two months later in Italy after it had been on tour in Latin America, it hit me much more intensely. I suppose that both the performance and I myself as a spectator had grown in the meantime, because the start of this dual process had already been.

Obviously the performance is so densely wowen that no one is able to take in its meandering pattern consciously at first sight, or for that matter at second sight. Still, the impact will be "there" somewhere in the spectator's psychophysical memory. The complex score will have been experienced as a physical, emotional, and mental fact, long before it develops into a conscious fact which establishes an approximately corresponding personal complexity. This complexity however still relates to the performance primarily as one field of energy and tension to another.

In august 1993 I went to Hostebro to see ***Kaosmos*** for the third time. *"I have never created anything so simple"*, Eugenio Barba told me after the performance. *"You call it simple?"* I answered, *"I am beginning to follow exactly how you make the stories pass on to each other"*. He looked at me. *"Oh, but you have seen the performance more than once"*.

He asked me if I had noticed any changes this time. I hadn't seen the performance since May. I knew that the actors had been working hard to the very last minute this time, in order to tighten the performance before they performed it to an audience again after the summer break. I thought I had seen one change. I was wrong. It had been there from the start. Later I faced more differences, either in my perception or in the successive performances, when I was confronted with them while comparing my notes step by step from all the performances I saw.

Now that I have seen the performance five times[41], each time with a different focus, I have come closer to its construction. Of necessity, I have chosen to focus on the performance at its present state of development - discarding from my text what was no longer there in favour of what is. The personal immediacy of my first impression is gone. If I had taken the trouble to write out in full my impressions each time, I would have collected a series of five different performance texts from five different points of view. I would probably also have exploded like the unlucky chameleon which was left on a Scottish kilt. Ideally, the series would have represented the stages in my understanding, as well as the different perspectives I had chosen, and the changes made in the performance during its first half year. Obviously I would not have been able to sort out which was which. An attempt to create an analytical order by sorting out the elements of this productive chaos would only have proved to be nonsensical and to kill the process.

I have chosen to do something else. To write one text which has grown with each repetition, and so contains the stages of my gradual conscious approach in the shape of textual layers which are still partly visible. On principle any performance is bottomless. However much you exhaust yourself, you still do not exhaust it. On top of that, once I decided to meet again the strange loops of ***Kaosmos*** in recollection and in person, they activated a hard work of reference and self-reference in myself

as a spectator and as an analyst. Some people may of course insist that any performance ought to be consumed at once, and dislike this performance because it is complex and detonates so slowly. Perhaps it does not seem to go off at all in themselves personally, or perhaps they do not like what it stirs in them. Like all theatre, it works through a complementarity of seduction and initiation which is a bore and an offense to some people.

One reverberation of the performance is unusual however. It openly resists the condition of theatre. It confronts the spectators with the complexity of a dream or of a ritual, as well as of modern art. In an attempt to activate the spectators to the maximum, it takes the greatest possible advantage of the time lag of consciousness. Like in a ritual, or a poem, its full intrinsic complexity only unfolds gradually through active repetition and mutual attendance. But even so it cannot be transformed into anything but the laboratory of reality called theatre. Neither the spectators, nor the actors, nor the director, will be able to transform the complex psychophysical meditation which the actors work so hard to activate, into anything which resembles a dictatorial control - be it shamanistic, or only too rational. This carnal meditation cannot be summed up into anything which stands firmly on the ground of one embodiment, or floats safely in the thin air of one meta-thought. Hopefully all parties know how to appreciate the poetic justice of the fact that they all have to keep walking in the labyrinth.

High Density Actions, High Density Terms[42]

Kaosmos, or *The Ritual of the Door* is a performance about the interplay of *cosmos* and *chaos*. That is: order and disorder, or form and formlessness. So is acting.

Why, if not for this, does modern theatre so often borrow its

central terms? Of course: Art is a thief. But this is hardly a reply. Why are some terms considered worth stealing whereas others are not? Why has theatre no stable notation system like music? On the contrary, why did for instance Stanislavsky insist on speaking ironically of *"my socalled system"*? And why do terms so often compete in modern theatre? For instance why don't Mr. Magic If, Mr. Biomechanics, Mr. Verfremdung, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Via Negativa, Mr. Empty Space, and Mr. Pre-Expressivity agree a little more conveniently on some basic terms for acting? The tricky question is: Would it really be a help if they did?

The terms for acting have one thing in common. They are alive. Their function is not description but indication. They signify in an indirect way. The terms aim at the actors' work processes. Typically, they are metaphorical concepts which may look quite inaccurate on a page in a book. Their primary function is kinetic: the terms have to *work* in the right way in order to stimulate the actor's body memory and ingenuity. From a traditional scientific or logical point of view it is a contradiction in terms that the inexact concepts of theatre do in fact *work* exellently and with great precision when they are used in their right context.

A quick glance at terms currently used in contemporary theatre will suffice as an example. When you wish to speak about a sequence of physical actions which an actor performs, you typically do so by using a term borrowed from another art.

You may say that the actor performs a score. *Score* is an old loan from music which Ekhof already used, Fuchs reintroduced, and Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and Grotowski developed. You may also choose to say that the actor creates a *montage*. *Montage* is an industrial term introduced from film by Meyerhold and Eisenstein, and also used in Russian constructivist art. Or you may prefer to speak of the actor's *dance*. *Dance* or *choreography* are old, direct loans from dance and ballet and were stressed by for instance Craig and Mejerhold[43]. Now, you may prefer rather to

speak of a sequence of physical *poetry*. This *poetry* was foregrounded by Artaud as a surrealist loan insisting upon the poetry of the senses[44]. Or you may choose instead to speak of the actor's physical *text*. *Text* is a simple loan from literature which Stanislavsky reworked as *subtext* in opposition to written text, and which Schechner and others later again relaunched with a new significance as *performance text*[45]. You may finally choose to speak of a chain of physical actions as a piece of *dramaturgy*, as Barba suggests with reference to Aristotle, by applying the literal meaning of Aristotle's term, *"actions at work"*, on the actor's physical work during performance[46]. And you may even continue this list.

All those borrowed terms are at your disposal when you wish to refer to a chain of physical actions which an actor performs. The terms are nothing but a chain of metaphorical analogies, all found in the other arts. Each of them signals particular esthetic preferences. They have been selected with care for special technical purposes in the acting concerned, and those purposes have activated certain analogies rather than others. But why does modern theatre use those terms at all? This is not only a question of theatrical innovation adapting new terms, but is a more widespread phenomenon in theatre. Is theatre perhaps not able to create its own terms, since it borrows its terms to such a high degree? If you compare the analogies on the list, they are also remarkably heterogenous. This may not look too reassuring either. Nevertheless, as a group of terms they have some evident characteristics in common.

The terms work by metaphorical analogy. That is: like theatre, they work by indirect indication. Each in their own way, these metaphorical analogies seem to make up for terms in acting which are somehow felt to be lacking. Somehow the analogy replaces a missing term. It does not hide this replacement, on the contrary the replacement is *striking*. And that is probably its main purpose. As a metaphorical analogy it is able to fulfil several simultaneous tasks. In the first place, the analogy indicates a

specific empirical phenomenon in acting. Secondly, it points at an analogous phenomenon in another art. And thirdly, *precisely because the term works as a metaphor itself, it is able to express that it refers to another metaphorical activity*. That is: to acting. In short, the analogy fulfils three tasks at the same time: one and the same term indicates an aspect of acting as an empirical fact, as an analogy and as a metaphor.

Considered as terms, these transferred terms are very odd. They are nothing but indirect indications and pragmatic comparisons based on precedent and analogy. However, because of their basic metaphorical qualities the terms are extremely useful tools in theatre work. They really manage to speak about acting because they speak about it in a credible way. That is: in a metaphorical way. The terms don't try to imitate what can only be expressed in body language, but still they all have a central intrinsic resemblance with the phenomena they indicate. They manage to reveal a quality inherent in their referent by *repeating* it in language. They copy it *as terms*. They work through a sort of metaphorical mimesis which is in constant dialogue with quite specific acting techniques which can only be met as live processes in performance. And so the terms manage to *tell*, because they are processual and poetic. They have a high semantic density which corresponds to the high semantic density of acting. And so, like acting, they reveal to the mind and to the senses what cannot be said in direct expression, by means of an indication which is an artistic circumvention and circumlocution.

Mudras: *Actions Preparing Actions of the Mind*

Form literally *means* a form (lat. *forma*). The literal meaning of type (Greek *typos*) is identical - a form or a stamp. The literal meaning of *archetype* (Greek *archetypos*) is an original type - something *stamped or implanted from the beginning*. The literal meaning of *character* (Greek *karakter*) is stamp - personal stamp.

The literal meaning of *person* (lat. *persona*) is a mask or a character. The literal meaning of *gesture* (lat. *gestus*) is an expressive attitude or movement of the body or the hands. All have to do with form or the movement of form.

As a performance, ***Kaosmos*** uses a variety of complementary forms. They are created by the physical actions of the actors. Sometimes an action, an expression, a form, a relation to a prop is foregrounded especially. How were they all moulded and what do they mould in return? In terms of acting, how does the indentation of chaos through cosmos create a passage through which something can speak?

The freedom of choice which the Odin actors have in building what they call their scores and their underscores, builds on a group tradition. This tradition has been developed over the years since the group's formation almost 30 years ago in 1964. From the outset, it was inspired by many experiments as well as traditions of acting. Obviously it focuses on physical actions as a cue to the actor's work, but it does not build exclusively on any single theatrical convention among those established in the past. Odin Teatret's theatrical heritage from Russia, Asia, Artaud, and Grotowski is obvious, but it would be a contradiction in terms to call this a "convention".

On the other hand, if you have followed the group's performances over the years, it is not difficult to see that the group has established a certain group tradition of acting. Besides, if you focus on the single actors, it is also possible to identify certain personal score elements, such as characteristic body movements, arm movements, or uses of the voice, as repetitions which "belong" to this or that actor, and have become an integral part of his or her acting. In *Kaosmos*, all the actors perform special characters, in the sense that each character has a special score based on a combination of character work and montage work. However, exactly how they have developed and composed their individual scores and characters for this perfor-

mance, only the actors can tell you.

Basically, the Odin actors invent new material, with new physical and vocal scores, for each new performance or character (if there is one). They may of course also in some cases adapt older material. Besides, during their personal training outside rehearsals, the actors may also create new scores, as an increase of their personal material for later use. How they work, the Odin actors have demonstrated over the years in public work demonstrations. So do for instance Torgeir Wethal, Iben Nagel Rasmussen, Roberta Carreri, and Julia Varley.

Each of them uses, and constantly develops, a certain stock of personal work principles, which are rooted in the group's experience and tradition, but are not necessarily identical with it. As a part of their training, they also continue to learn from other kinds of acting, as well as dancing. Because of this, the group's "tradition" at any time reflects its history and actual interests, as well as the personal choices of its actors within the group context, and their inspirations from outside it. Even to an experienced outsider, it is not always easy to tell whether a certain personal score, or fragment of a score, is in fact rooted in a practice and consensus established long ago, or whether is has been worked out recently from fresh common or personal experience.

As a consequence of this way of working, two critical assertions tend to recur in criticisms of Odin Teatret's performances: 1. That constant invention creates a formal disorder which results in incomprehension, because it is unpredictable and momentary. 2. That lack of invention creates a formal order which is only too comprehensive, because it is predictable and repetitive. It is fairly obvious that the two contending views may be aired against any sequence of consistent acting. You may say that both are right. The views reveal the two sides of physical actions on stage, be it theatre, dance, or song - invention (improvisation) and repetition.

perhaps the two perspectives also reveal something more in an indirect way: an uneasiness about the condition of constant unbalance in modern Western acting, compared to what is believed to be the stable acting conventions of the past. The criterion of personal inventiveness - newness - which the Romantics introduced as opposed to classicism, seems to have remained central in modern approaches to acting. As a value judgment it is in fact a two-way-traffic: a given kind of modern acting may be either too inventive, or not inventive enough. Probably the Odin group is only a sub-group in this more general problem of constant unbalance in the foundations, inventions, and evaluations of modern acting.

The approach to this unbalance as a specifically modern condition or challenge, which also is - or should be - at the core of the actor's work, is strange somehow. It is a core question in itself, but it often tends to merge two questions. One is the de-centreredness of modernity. The other is the focus of the actor. It is strange because it tends to leave modern acting with a task which is in fact a double-bind. The assumption is that modern acting, having broken away from the more stable conventions of the past, and especially from the more recent father-figure of naturalism, should create new kinds of credible stage presence which do not become new conventions, but change according to the moment. In this equation presence and moment are used as synonyms - as if forgetting what it takes to create artistic presence. But the two are not synonyms.

The assumption that this unbalance is a specifically modern condition refound in acting, is also strange from the point of view of acting. The assumption tends to forget that the stable conventions of the past were never closed systems deprived of innovation. On the contrary, not even the oldest, still existing stable conventions of theatre in Asia, the classical theatre and dance forms of India, are closed to the possibility of renewal. It just has to be motivated within the convention. India's seven

classical theatre and dance forms all rely on a fixed traditional system of *rasas* and *mudras* - eight basic moods and a rich variety of gestures, as described by Bharata in the Sanskrit text *Natyasastra*. Involved in this system are the four basic resources of the actor-dancer, corresponding to the four Vedas: movement and gesture, speech and song, costume and make-up, and psychological insight. For instance, the Orissi dancer Sanjukta Panigrahi explains that the aim of her long years of training have been *"to mould the different parts of the body"* according to the tradition, since *"any Indian artist only gets a stamp of individuality through the rasas"*. Once you master the technique, the greater aim then is *"to grow beyond the technique"*. But this does not mean, she says, that invention has stopped. She can not only create her own choreographies, but also create new ***mudras***[47].

In modern Western acting, the reverse is the case. The unbroken convention is lost land. We may invent a multitude of *mudras* without fixing them beyond the performance. The concept of the moment has replaced the concept of tradition, and the concept of performance has replaced the concept of convention. As a consequence, the concepts of tradition and convention have been displaced, if not directly repressed. Displaced they are, but an act of repression would only prove to be in vain.

Artistic repetition is not style. It is form. Which form is basically a question of alphabet. In the vocabulary of traditional Indian theatre, a gesture corresponds to a seal. The Sanskrit word *mudra* means three things: a seal, money, and a signifying gesture performed by an actor. The gesture leaves an impression, an imprint, on the spectator, and the spectator already knows the possible meanings of the-gesture-seal and its relation to the other gesture-seals.

Modern Western acting has broken away from such stable conventions of the past. But form it must seek nonetheless every time it breaks form. In part, the word *mudra* is analogous to the dual meaning of the French word *cliché*: a printer's block - or a

stock expression, a stereotype. However the analogy stops dead when Western theatre uses *cliché* as a general pejorative for stereotypes which are felt to be no longer valid, no longer credible. Such as theatrical clichés or standard type-casting. Then *cliché* marks a run-down convention which is felt to be repetitive and artistically dead. Instead, more credible expressive forms replace it. Whereas *mudra* marks a live and unbroken Indian convention. As such it cannot be exported, only studied as a technique. This study may sometimes help to replace forms which have become *clichés*.

The modern Western approach to acting reflects basics in modern society and modern thought. I would like to illustrate this with the following, significant comparison: the story of Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the 15th century. In his book *The Act of Creation*, 1964, Arthur Koestler examines how Gutenberg found the right solution[48]. Gutenberg's invention is just another case of creating a new form by breaking an old one, and of transferring traditional work principles to new and untraditional uses.

Gutenberg was a pious German. He had a dream: to create a way to print the whole thirteen hundred pages of the Bible in multiple copies. This could not be done with the usual carved woodblocks. It is a paradox that what he did in fact create was a way to print any text. Any combination of letters including the Bible.

There is an interesting analogy between what Gutenberg did and what a modern actor does. The range of possible gestures which a modern actor has at his or her disposal can be compared to the infinite possibilities of letter combinations which Gutenberg created when he designed the printing press in the 15th-century, breaking away from tradition.

Gutenberg the printer did not start from scratch. He studied the tradition. In this he resembles Stanislavsky and other modern

explorers of acting. Gutenberg studied the stamping of coins and the use of seals. The seal he found to be perfect. It left nothing more to say. Just like a *mudra*, we may add.

"When you apply to the vellum or paper the seal of your community, everything has been said, everything is done, everything is there. Do you not see that you can repeat as many times as necessary the seal covered with signs and characters?"[49]

What Gutenberg wanted was letters, however, and a stable method of printing them. Like Stanislavsky and other modern explorers of acting, he did not begin by studying the result but by studying the difficult technique behind. It takes an intricate combination of punches and blows to create the stamp which finally produces a gold coin.

"Every coin begins with a punch. The punch is a little rod of steel, one end of which is engraved with the shape of one letter, several letters, all the signs which are seen in relief on a coin. The punch is moistened and driven into a piece of steel, which becomes the 'hollow' or 'stamp'. It is into these coin-stamps, moistened in their turn, that are placed the little discs of gold, to be converted into coins, by a powerful blow."[50]

The work in fact begins by creating the negative of the negative of the final coin. In exactly the same way, Stanislavsky kept experimenting during all his professional life with ever new ways of creating the negative of the negative of the impact made on the spectator. And in exactly the same way, Eugenio Barba too makes the Odin actors elaborate their physical actions in each and every detail, leading up to this final meeting - always working on two simultaneous levels, their score as well as their underscore[51].

With Gutenberg, it is an ironic coincidence that he found the final technical solution to his pious printing project while participating in the wine harvest. In a flash of thought, the stamping feet of the wine press became the prototype of the printing press: another surprising creation of Dionysos. Gutenberg only needed a few lines to his correspondent, a monk, to present his final solution moulded after the seal and after the naked feet stamping the raisins.

"One *must strike, cast, make a form like the seal of your*

community; a mould such as that used for casting your pewter cups; letters in relief like those on your coins, and the punch for producing them like your foot when it multiplies its print. There is the Bible!"[52]

Gutenberg worked by analogy. It *worked*. Considered from another analogy: that of theatre, his lines indicate very precisely the difference between the unbreakable seals of traditional Indian theatre, and the endless letter combinations available to a modern actor. Like for instance the difference between the *mudras* of an Orissi actor-dancer like Sanjukta Panigrahi, and the physical scores of an Odin actor. It is the difference between having a tradition and building a personal one. It is not necessarily a difference in richness of expression. In both cases the actor needs an active ideal, and a direct line of heritage characterized by preservation through variation.

A modern actor may select his or her letters in any way, and combine them in any way without creating a *"Bible"*. She or he may not even want to create one. Still, they may keep the quality of their personal *mudras* alive and credible in many ingenious ways, leaving the imprints of their personal letters or seals alive in the spectators long after the performance is over. In this way the actor's stage work during his or her professional life, and the spectator's corresponding body memories, replace to some degree the functions of the stable conventions of the past. They fill what seems like an empty space with another and more fluid kind of intersubjectivity which may still at times create a presence strong enough to transcend the moment and change the position of the spectator.

In Western mainstream theatre, many people have grown into the habit of thinking of different acting conventions as different styles and techniques, rather than as different approaches to the work. However what seems like different choices of style and technique may in fact be different live traditions. And live traditions may meet, without just copying each other. Different techniques may of course be applications of different principles, or even contending principles. But in other cases they

may rather be different applications of similar principles, or even identical principles. What always saves the basic quality of theatre as an open field, is the fact - created by no-one - that in theatre, like elsewhere, contemporarity and synchronism are never quite the same thing. Because it involves all the senses, theatre reminds of this fact. Its *mudras* are not identical. Some are stable and others are not. Some are on the move. Some have gone into hiding. Some work by denying themselves ironically. Some are replaced almost immediately. But a *mudra* is a *mudra* if it *works*. It seems that theatre can't help creating them, and questioning them in their very creation.

Janne Risum

Aarhus, December 1993

Acknowledgements:

My warm thanks to the Odin actors and staff. You always answered my questions controlling this or that detail in the performance with prompt and kind precision. If my text is more complicated than is necessary it is not your fault.

I finished the text in late 1993, coinciding with a period when *Kaosmos* wasn't performed, and no video had yet been made. As a consequence: I am indebted to Iben Nagel Rasmussen and Roberta Carreri. The two of you happened to be around when I needed "inside" proof-readers for a last control of factual errors, to which I might be blind. With commitment, and very entertaining question- and exclamation marks, you did what I asked: "a cold reading, to correct my physical actions, if possible, and check the costume". I was impressed to see that you reacted to almost exactly the same things, besides details concerning your own characters. I am grateful that you took the time, though I don't know how you found it. I hope my corrections repay some of your generosity. I am positive that you will still approach this text just as critically as any other. If I had not been, I would not have asked you. Any surviving errors in my rendering of the many simultaneous actions in the performance, are of course my own responsibility.

- I have not forgotten the director: Thank you, Eugenio, for presenting me with this riddle. I have no solution to it.

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Notes:

1.Programme text, *Kaosmos. The Ritual of The Door*, Odin Teatret 1993. The Doorkeeper's first lines were cut after some performances.

The programme exists in Danish and in other languages. Here and in the following I quote from the English version. Lines not printed in the programme I translate myself.

In this text I shall use footnotes. I regret that the programme of *Kaosmos* uses only one. The reason is this: A certain Ferenc Gombai, a very old Hungarian scholar whom Eugenio Barba states in the programme to have met in person in a Hungarian café accompanied by his seventh wife, contributes to the programme with an essay on the folkloric theatre of Transylvania: *The Theatre of the Mountains and the Ritual of the Door*. As Barba also informs, the essay has been translated and reprinted **in extracts, with all footnotes except one omitted by Barba.** I regret the omission. After all Gombai's text, as printed in the programme and introduced by Barba's own *Origins of Kaosmos*, not only strongly presents all the main elements found in *Kaosmos*, but does so with a *"surrealistic sense of humour"* (so Barba). Evidently both authors belong to a rich tradition, which also counts E. T. A. Hoffmann, and cannot be overestimated. One Danish theatre critic has already referred to Gombai's essay as a *"convincing"* source text about the *"authentic"* background of the performance in *"Hungarian folklore"* (*Information*, 19.10.1993). May I point out that it would be even more revealing to print

Gombai's obscure text in full, all footnotes included. However, only an ideal publisher could do the job.

2. *The Act of Creation*, London: Arkana, 1989 (1964), p. 327.

3. Jan Ferslev informs me that he moves from E to H, succeeded by a swift continuum up the scale. He tunes the string so that it corresponds to the scale of Kaj Bredholt's accordion.

4. Paul Claudel: *Le Soulier de Satin, ou Le Pire n'est pas toujours sûr* (The Satin Slipper, or The Worst is not the Surest), 1919-24. Shortened and revised in 1943 in collaboration with Jean-Louis Barrault for a production at the Comédie-Francaise, with music by Honegger.

5. H. C. Andersen: *Historien om en Moder*, 1848.

6. Cf. Roland Barthes: "The Grain of the Voice" (1972), translated by Richard Howard in *The Responsibility of Forms*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: UCP, 1991, p. 267-77.

7. My translation.

8. I think there is reason to stress the interplay in art between the closure of representation and its disclosure. This dual process partly (!) escapes the fatal (and tragic) split-theory of (post)modern art proposed by Jacques Derrida in his essay "Le théâtre de la cruauté et la clôture de la représentation", in *L'écriture et la différence*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967 (English translation, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

9. József Attila: *The Seventh*, 1932. József is his family name (in Hungarian, the family name comes first). He was 27 when he wrote the poem.

10.1. *"I en bølge ganske blidt"*, a sailor's song composed for the performance by Kaj Bredholt, paraphrasing a song in Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (*"The Small Hunter"*). 2. *"Du gamle måne"*, a hit from the fifties. 3. *"Nu titte til hinanden de favre blomster små"*, text: Bernhard Severin Ingemann 1837, mel.: C. F. Weyse. 4. *"En vår er kommet så mildt og stille"*, text: Sigfred Pedersen 1951, mel.: Knud Vad Thomsen. 5. *"Nu er det længe siden"*, text: Jeppe Aakjær 1906, mel.: Oluf Ring. 6. *"Det var en lørdag aften"*, Danish folk song, adapted by Svend Grundtvig 1849. 7. *"Se min kjole"*, Children's song, text & mel.: Gunnar Nyborg-Jensen. 8. *"Anna Lovinda"*, text: Peter Mynte, mel.: Erik Bye. 9. *"Han er lyset nede i dalen"*, a Salvation Army song. 10. *"Danmark, nu blunder den lyse nat"*, text: Thøger Larsen 1914, mel.: Oluf Ring.

11. Snorri Sturluson: *Edda*, c. 1220, Iceland.

12. Cf. Victor Shklovsky: "Art as technique" (1917), in, e. g., David Lodge (Ed.): *Modern Criticism and Theory*, London and New York: Longman, 1988, p. 15-30.

13.The Danish equivalents to the moods (*rasas*) of Indian theatre are not so much contained in our gestures as in our songs. Danish *mudras* are the *mudras* of the voice, and of the words, the music and the dances which mould the voice and belong to it. This is why Odin Teatret's synesthetic style of acting, where body and voice are used in counterpoint, is often much closer to the acculturated movement patterns of Danish bodies and voices, than imported traditions of stage styles succeed to be.

14.Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche: *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, 1872.

15.Reprinted in the programme.

16.My translation. - *"Jeg leter efter landet hvor man ikke dør"*. - (to the Country Bride): *"Det haster endu ikke"*. - (taking out his watch): *"Det er endnu masser af tid"*. - (sings to the Country Bride, who sings *"Du har en favn fuld af sæd"*): *"Skal jeg kaste den ut på sand, og gjøre det til fruktbart land?"* - (interrupting the second Joszéf Attila stanza): *"Det haster ennu ikke"*. - (to the Country Bride): *"Det er ennu tid nok. Bank på døren og den vil blive åpnet for dig"*. - (agitated: *"Svetten - furer i ansiktet - alting skal begynne"*. - (to the Mother): *"Hvis du kjenner veien så har du ikke bruk for øynene. Stig opp, reis dig"*. - (to the Mother): *"Gå din vei, kvinne. Du foregriper tiden"*. - (getting up): *"Jeg kaster seden ut på sand, og gør dét til fruktbart land"*. - (making his watch strike twelve on the shovel): *"Nu er tiden inne"*.

17.Claudel's Doña Musica is at home just as well in a Sicilian grotto, as on the sea, or when found kneeling on the floor in the sensuous baroque interior in the church of St. Nicholas in Prague. It is difficult not to associate her delicate character with Mozart's polyphony and assertion that *"Death is no hobgoblin; Death is a friend"* (so Alfred Einstein, summarizing Mozart's *Requiem*, 1791. Cf. Mozart's letters). In fact, the inhabitants of Prague were the first to perform a requiem for Mozart: Shortly after his death: In the church of St. Nicholas.

18.*"I en bølge ganske blidt/skyggen sprang og spejded' vidt"* (From a gentle wawe/up jumps a shadow), by Kaj Bredholt. Reprinted in the programme.

19.*Hyrdinden og Skorstensfeieren*, 1845. Reprinted in the programme.

20.*"Hvis du vil kan du vaske mig ren"*.

21.*"Det haster endnu ikke"*.

22.I quote Blake's poem as printed in the English programme text. The poem continues: *"For on no other ground/ Can I sow my seed/ Without tearing up/ Some stinking weed"*.

23.*Nu titte til hinanden de favre blomster små;*
de muntre fugle kalde på hverandre;
nu alle jordens børn deres øjne opslå;
nu sneglen med hus på ryg vil vandre.

Bernhard Severin Ingemann: *Morning Songs for Children*, 1837.

24.*Den kære Gud og skaber den mindste orm er nær;*
han føder fugl og markens lilje klæder;
dog menneskenes børn har han allermest kær: -
Gud ånder på øjet, når det græder.

(The dear God and creator is near the smallest worm;
he feeds the bird and clothes the lily in the field;
yet the children of Man he holds most of all dear: -
God breathes on the eye, when it weeps.). My translation.

25.*"Det er ham!"*

26.*"De kaldte ham kornet"*. Jan Ferslev created the song for this situation in the performance.

27.*"En vår er kommet så mildt og stille"*.

28.*"Nu er det længe siden"*.

29.*"Måne, er du endnu min ven? Måne, så glem det igen" - "Du gamle måne"* (Old Moon).

30.*"Det var en lørdag aften"*.

31.*"Se min kjole"*.

32.Amaryllis is the name of a country girl in the bucolic poetry of Virgil. It is also the name of a family of flowers: amaryllis, of which the daffodil (narcissus) is perhaps the most familiar, from many poems and connotations. For instance as an Easter flower. The song contributes to the metaphorical connexion between the Country Bride and the Easter Passion which the performance establishes.

33.*"Han er lyset nede i dalen"*.

34.See note 22.

35.Roland Barthes: "Arcimboldo, or Magician and Rhétoriqueur" (1978), *The Responsibility of Forms*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: UCP, 1991, p. 141, 147.

36.Cf. Sergei Eisenstein: *"The Enchanter from the Pear Garden"* (1935).

37.The characters speaks Norwegian and Danish. I quote from the English programme text.

38.Programme text.